



# NEWS



## News Headlines 08/31/2021

- Firefighters gaining control of three multi-day wildfires in Cajon Pass area; all road closures lifted
- Caldor Fire prompts states of emergency in Nevada and California, with more than 50,000 told to evacuate the Lake Tahoe region

## Firefighters gaining control of three multi-day wildfires in Cajon Pass area; all road closures lifted

Charlie McGee, Victorville Daily Press

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The so-called Railroad Fire was one of the three to maintain an active burn in the Cajon Pass area as of midday Monday August 30, 2021. Here a view of the firefighting effort against it is given from interstate 15, which was shut down at the time. Courtesy of San Bernardino National Forest.

Firefighters are increasing their hold on three wildfires that provoked multi-agency responses, road closures and some evacuations in the area of Cajon Pass over the last week due to fears about their rapid initial spreads.

San Bernardino National Forest officials announced midday Monday that emergency personnel had contained a higher portion of the South Fire, Roadside Fire and Railroad Fire overnight.

As a result, all remaining road closures imposed by authorities, including a temporary shutdown imposed Sunday on a busy stretch of Interstate 15, are no longer in place.

### **Railroad Fire**

Two of the fires began this past weekend. The Railroad Fire began rapidly spreading Sunday afternoon on the north side of the railroad tracks that run alongside Interstate 15, near Highway 138, San Bernardino National Forest spokesperson Lisa Cox told the Daily Press from the scene.

The Railroad Fire stood at 61 acres on Monday, and was 50% contained with its forward-burning momentum halted, the San Bernardino National Forest announced.

That acreage is an uptick from the most-recent previous estimate of the Railroad Fire's reach of 25 acres, which San Bernardino National Forest announced Sunday evening, adding that the blaze was 30% contained at the time.

Cox told the Daily Press that threats of the fire advancing to — and potentially across — Interstate 15 were “a higher priority to mitigate by aircraft than getting accurate mapping” at the time.

The northbound lanes of I-15, as well as the nearby railroad, were closed off Sunday in response. Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad and Union Pacific Railroad were affected by the fire, officials said.

Southbound lanes reopened Sunday afternoon, but northbound drivers were still left needing a detour into the evening. Both sides of the interstate have since reopened.

## **Roadside Fire**

The second wildfire to gain prominence this weekend ignited in a different area of the Cajon Pass on Saturday.

The Roadside Fire stood at 50 acres as of midday Monday, San Bernardino National Forest officials announced, which is the same acreage it reportedly covered for most of the weekend.

Firefighters had contained 60% of the Roadside Fire, which is double the containment reported Sunday afternoon.

Residents and businesses off Cajon Boulevard between Keenbrook Road and Swarthout Canyon Road were briefly asked to evacuate in response after the blaze started Saturday.

A rapid response by firefighters and aircraft from the San Bernardino National Forest, CalFire and **San Bernardino County Fire** stopped both the Roadside and Railroad fires' forward spread soon after they began.

## **South Fire**

The South Fire began last Wednesday, Aug. 25, just north of Interstate 15 in the area of Lytle Creek Road and Sierra Avenue. It burned to a greater size than the weekend wildfires before firefighters could begin to get a grip on it.

While still active and maintaining a size of 819 acres that it carried through the weekend, the South Fire was 49% contained by firefighters as of midday Monday, according to the San Bernardino National Forest. Containment on Sunday evening stood at 30%.

Getting the South Fire almost halfway contained is a positive sign given the grim potential some saw in the wildfire last week.

The South Fire has destroyed nine homes and eight "non-housing" structures, damaged a dozen other buildings and disrupted basic utilities such as electricity and water, according to officials from CalFire and the San Bernardino National Forest.

Roughly 1,000 residents were forced to evacuate soon after the wildfire began rapidly spreading around 1:30 p.m. last Wednesday. That order lasted almost four days until it was downgraded to a warning Sunday.

An evacuation center set up by the American Red Cross at the Jessie Turner Center in Fontana for residents affected by the South Fire closed around noon Monday, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department said on Facebook, with evacuees allowed to return home.

Mike McClintock, a battalion chief with San Bernardino County Fire, heads up a unit that was among the roughly 600 personnel who responded to the South Fire, and smaller teams that responded to the Roadside and Railroad fires.

“It’s safe to say that the multi-agency response has been helpful in keeping these fires small,” he told the Daily Press. He added that, coincidentally, each wildfire’s proximity to one another made it easier for firefighters to mount an initial attack with full force.

McClintock said each fire initially fell into the jurisdiction of either San Bernardino National Forest or CalFire. Yet, the effort to combat the flames becomes a team effort when they fall into so-called “mutual threat zones.”

“Where we play a part is when it comes close to lives and property,” he said. “We really try to send a full response to those fires when we have stake in the game.”

<https://www.vvdailynews.com/story/news/fire/2021/08/30/firefighters-gaining-control-three-multi-day-wildfires-cajon-pass-area-all-road-closures-lifted/5657226001/>

## **Caldor Fire prompts states of emergency in Nevada and California, with more than 50,000 told to evacuate the Lake Tahoe region**

Kelly McCleary, CNN

Posted: August 31, 2021



(CNN)The governors of California and Nevada declared states of emergency Monday as the fast-moving Caldor Fire prompted officials to tell everyone in the city of South Lake Tahoe to get out.

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency in Alpine, Amador and Placer counties, which surround the Lake Tahoe region, his office announced.

The Caldor Fire has consumed 191,607 acres since it began on August 14, according to Cal Fire. It is 16% contained.

Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak also declared a state of emergency Monday in anticipation of flames from the Caldor Fire crossing state lines in the coming days.

The declaration "ensures resources from the local, state, and federal levels are available to assist as needed during this emergency," a statement from Sisolak's office said.

The efforts to optimize resources come as the fire raced toward the vacation enclave of Lake Tahoe, which straddles the California-Nevada border.

The entire city of South Lake Tahoe and the southern portion of the lake were put under mandatory evacuation Monday.

"It is being done out of an abundance of caution, but the full city limits are under an evacuation order," South Lake Tahoe city spokesperson Lindsey Baker told CNN. Inmates at the South Lake Tahoe Jail were also evacuated, the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office said.

The fire was active overnight and embers traveled up to three quarters of a mile, according to the incident report. Strong winds tested control lines and the area is under a red flag warning through Wednesday night, according to the incident report.

"We do have very active fire behavior, spotting, and torching and very dry fuels under these drought conditions and we expect this active firefight to continue over the next couple days under this weather condition," warned Cal Fire Chief Brian Newman at a press briefing Monday night.

"Three-and-a-half hours of being stuck on Highway 50, I'm so appreciative that our citizens listened to the warning and the order and evacuated the city," marveled South Lake Tahoe Police Chief David Stevenson.

"Their response was fantastic and I appreciate them. I'm glad to know they are safe," he said, grateful residents heeded the evacuation orders Monday.

"As many of you are aware, we are seeing larger and more destructive fires burn throughout California on a much more frequent basis. Historically, we've used the terms such as anomaly, unprecedented, or extreme to describe the wildfires that we have seen burn throughout the state over the last 20 years. These terms are no longer appropriate given the clear trends associated with drought, changing climate," lamented Cal Fire Chief Chris Anthony. "Unfortunately, these factors contribute to the resistance to control that we're seeing with the Caldor Fire," he reasoned. "Many people, including myself, consider the Tahoe Basin a unique treasure and a natural wonder of the world whether you live here full time, own a second home here, visit the basin during family vacations, or simply recreate here, there are simply hundreds of thousands of people who hold Tahoe dear to their heart."

The fire destroyed 486 homes and threatens 33,679 structures.

Cal Fire estimates full containment by September 13. The cause of the fire is under investigation

Roads in the area quickly became clogged with traffic as residents scrambled to leave.

The evacuation order covers more than 53,000 residents in El Dorado County, which includes South Lake Tahoe, according to the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

Barton Memorial Hospital in South Lake Tahoe evacuated its patients Sunday to partner facilities in the region, the hospital said in a tweet Sunday night. The hospital said Monday it was closing all services and medical offices, including its urgent care and emergency department.

So far, the Caldor Fire has destroyed 664 structures -- residential, commercial or otherwise -- according to Cal Fire. Nearly 40 structures have been damaged and five injuries are reported, officials said.

The fire is being fueled by dangerously dry conditions as California suffers through an extreme drought, driven by climate change.

"The forecast for areas around the Caldor fire, in particular, doesn't look that good for the next few days," CNN Meteorologist Michael Guy said. Red flag warnings are in effect for the northern Sierra to western Nevada, including the Lake Tahoe area, until Wednesday night. Strong winds with gusts up to 35 mph are forecast, along with isolated locations getting up to 50 mph, according to the National Weather Service in Reno.

The area is also very dry, with relative humidity running between 5% and 10%, Guy said. The low humidity and lack of rain is providing plenty of parched land for the fire to burn.

Smoke and haze are also going to be a problem and are in the forecast for the next seven days, Guy said, noting this will at least help keep temperatures relatively mild with highs in the upper 70s.

### **National Forests closed to the public as fires ravage California**

There are 13 large fires actively burning in California, scorching a total of 1,460,782 acres, the National Interagency Fire Center reported.

The largest blaze, the Dixie Fire, has been active for 46 days and burned 777,741 acres, according to Cal Fire. It is 48% contained.

Overall this year, 1.76 million acres have burned from 6,913 fires, Cal Fire said.

With resources stretched and no relief from the fire-fueling conditions in sight, the US Forest Service is temporarily closing all national forests in California.

The closure goes into effect Tuesday night and will last through at least September 17, the US Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region said Monday.

The order is a precautionary step to reduce the likelihood that visitors could become trapped during emergency fire circumstances, the Forest Service said.

"We do not take this decision lightly, but this is the best choice for public safety," Regional Forester Jennifer Eberlien said in a statement. "It is especially hard with the approaching Labor Day weekend, when so many people enjoy our national forests."

As the fires continue to spread, approximately 200 US Army Soldiers are being trained to assist firefighters in their battle against the flames, a statement from US Army North Public Affairs said.

Units from Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state will be trained to assist with the response to the Dixie Fire which is burning on National Parks land, the release said.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/31/weather/western-wildfires-tuesday/index.html>