

Valley air about to get worse as wildfire smoke has nowhere to go

By Corin Hoggard and Dale Yurong

Tuesday, September 29, 2020

FRESNO, Calif. (KFSN) -- Air quality is about to take a turn for the worse as a changing weather pattern will combine with wildfires to fill the Central Valley with smoke again.

The last few months have produced a stretch of the worst air quality on record, according to the Air Pollution Control District.

Satellite images show smoke gently blowing from several California fires out to the Pacific Ocean, a weather pattern keeping the Valley's air relatively clean for several days now.

"Right now we're seeing the smoke aloft," said Maricela Velasquez of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. "It's above us. But as the week goes through, we'll continue to see that smoke come onto the Valley floor."

Here's how: When you have a fire in the Central Valley -- which is essentially just a bowl -- the smoke can usually get out and air quality won't be bad everywhere. But when a high pressure system comes in, it essentially puts a lid on the bowl and the smoke has nowhere to go so it just collects on the Valley floor.

"The blocking high, basically, once it sits over a certain spot it likes to stay there for quite a while," said meteorologist Carlos Molina of the National Weather Service in Hanford.

Forecasters at the NWS say the lid will sit on our bowl for at least a week.

Air Quality Science Director Jon Klassen of the Valley Air District said, "We're expecting that to continue in the coming days."

By that time, our air will have collected smoke from the Creek Fire, the SQF Complex Fire, and even more recent fires to our west, like the Glass Fire in the Bay Area.

"Once the high pressure ridge kind of shifts more inland, it's going to start allowing that air flow to start reversing back over to west to east," Molina said. "What's going to happen is -- of course everything is blowing over the ocean (now) -- it's going to start later this week start shifting into the Valley."

The bottom line for everyone in the Central Valley will be a threat to health.

Throat irritation, burning eyes, and headaches are some of the more minor problems, but the smoke can cause problems with your lungs and heart.

Even before wildfire smoke started to pour into the valley, the American Lung Association ranked Valley cities among the worst in the country for year-round particle pollution. Bakersfield was number one, followed by Fresno-Madera- Hanford collectively. Visalia was next and then the Los Angeles-Long Beach area.

"PM 2.5, which is what's in smoke, actually can go into your bloodstream and so that's when you can start to have impacts on your heart," said Velasquez of the Valley Air District.

The cloth masks most people are wearing to reduce the spread of coronavirus won't protect you, and the N95 masks that will be in short supply.

People were reminded to limit their time spent outdoors as a return to unhealthy air conditions was expected this week. The fine particles can cause breathing and other health issues.

The Valley Air District recommends people track air quality on their website or at airnow.gov and stay indoors when it gets bad.

Air quality in San Joaquin Valley is 'worst we've ever had,' officials say

By Manuela Tobias

Fresno Bee, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020

The Valley Air District on Tuesday declared air quality in the central San Joaquin Valley has never been worse and urged residents to stay indoors.

"This has been really exceptional, and I would say this is the worst air quality wildfire period that we've ever had," said Jon Klassen, director of air quality science and planning, during a video news conference.

The San Joaquin Valley is enveloped by some of the largest fires in California history. The Creek Fire, burning along both sides of the San Joaquin River near Mammoth Pool, Shaver Lake, Big Creek, and Huntington Lake, is the state's largest-ever single-fire incident. The SQF Complex Fire has scorched 150,800 acres in and near the Sequoia National Park and forest.

The fires have burned nearly 3.8 million acres statewide, according to Cal Fire. And they're only getting started, with several new fires cropping up over the past week.

Winds and lower air pressure allowed the smoke to blow through and out of the Valley in the past week, clearing the skies. But as winds have died down and air pressure mounted, a sort of lid has come down over the region and trapped the hazardous air, Klassen explained.

Air quality will continue to deteriorate over the coming days, reaching a peak early next week, officials warned.

"The number one piece of advice we're giving the public at this time is to stay inside," said Chief Communications Officer Jaime Holt.

Not even cloth or paper masks that protect people from the coronavirus will help in this case, she added.

"The smoke can get around the masks and actually get into your lungs and into your bloodstream," Holt said.

The hazardous air is linked to asthma attacks and other respiratory issues, as well as cardiovascular issues and even dementia, Holt said.

N95 masks are recommended but in scarce supply. Holt urged outdoor workers to ask for these masks from their employers. Employers are required to make masks available to employees free of charge if the air quality index for particulate matter 2.5 exceeds 151, per state statute. The Bee has reported many farmworkers have failed to get one despite these regulations.

Holt also recommended that people change their air filters at home and in their cars. If you need an air filter, The Bee has created a guide to help make one at home.

The Valley Air District will issue another health caution statement this afternoon.

You can check the daily air quality forecast on ValleyAir.org.

California's wine country residents facing fire fatigue

By Olga R. Rodriguez and Terry Chea, Associated Press
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020

NAPA, Calif. (AP) — Will Abrams and his family packed their pickup truck with laptops, clothes, sleeping bags and a tent and quickly left their rental home in California's wine country after seeing flames on a hill about a quarter-mile away Monday morning. It was their third hurried fire evacuation in as many years.

In 2017, Abrams woke up to find their Santa Rosa home on fire and cleared burning branches from the driveway so he could get his wife and children to safety. Their home was destroyed. Then last year, the family evacuated as another wildfire bore down on Sonoma County. They were terrified to cross into the San Francisco Bay Area amid smaller grassland fires sparked by power lines falling in the midst of strong, hot winds.

"This time we hurried up and packed up the car, and we were in gridlock traffic on (Highway) 12 while the flames were approaching from behind," Abrams said Tuesday. He and his wife tried to entertain the kids by making conversation so they wouldn't panic. "It was just obviously traumatic on a personal level, but also just that so little has changed since the fires of 2017 in terms of preparedness and prevention."

They have been told this home is still standing. But with the Glass Fire only 2% contained, the Abrams and their 12-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter are staying in Berkeley until they are allowed to return.

"I'm trying to prepare my kids and let them know that climate change is part of life and they're going to have to deal with it as they get older and also trying to provide them a sense of safety and security. It's not easy. But we should not accept this is the way it's going to be," he said.

The Abrams family is among thousands of weary wine country residents confronting another devastating wildfire. The Glass Fire, which started Sunday, has scorched nearly 73 square miles (more than 188 square kilometers) and destroyed about 95 structures, including at least 80 homes.

It's the fourth major fire there in three years and comes ahead of the third anniversary of a 2017 wildfire that killed 22 people. Three fires, driven by gusty winds and high temperatures, merged into one on Sunday, tearing into vineyards and mountain areas, including part of the city of Santa Rosa. About 70,000 people were under evacuation orders, including the entire 5,000-plus population of Calistoga in Napa County.

Numerous studies have linked bigger wildfires in America to climate change from the burning of coal, oil and gas. Scientists say climate change has made California much drier, meaning trees and other plants are more flammable.

The Glass Fire spread rapidly and is now burning through land that was saved from the other recent wine country fires, Cal Fire Assistant Chief Billy See said. Some of the land has not burned for a century, while crews are now using old containment lines to fight the current fire, relieved slightly by easing winds.

It's one of nearly 30 wildfires burning around California. The state has already seen more than 8,100 wildfires that have killed 29 people, scorched 5,780 square miles (14,970 square kilometers) and destroyed more than 7,000 buildings.

Patrick Ryan, who lives in Sonoma County just outside Santa Rosa, stayed up the whole night trying to fight the flames and save his house, which survived.

"Surreal, let me just put it that way. It brings everything about that night in 2017 right back again," Ryan said.

Mike Christianson and his wife, Mluz Torres, who were at an evacuation center Tuesday, had watched the fire engulf their Napa County home.

"It was within five minutes, the entire side of the hill was on fire. All trees, all burning, all roaring like a jet," he said. "And at that moment, we realized that it was time to go. So we grabbed a few things, jumped in the car."

Sonoma County Sheriff Mark Essick acknowledged "some significant fire fatigue" in the community during a news conference Tuesday.

"Many people are feeling the effects, many people are evacuating, and evacuated multiple times, and I just want everyone to know that we continue to support you," Essick said.

The blaze tore through many iconic wineries in Napa and Sonoma counties and the five-starred Meadowood Resort, home to a three-Michelin-starred restaurant.

Further to the north, in what has already been a historically devastating wildfire season for California, a blaze in a heavily forested area of rural Shasta County has killed three people and destroyed nearly 150 buildings. The circumstances of their deaths are not known. More than 1,200 people were evacuated for the Zogg Fire, which has burned more than 72 square miles (nearly 203 square kilometers).

Zogg incident commander Sean Kavanaugh said winds from the north have subsided, giving firefighters an opportunity to get resources around the large fire.

"The weather has given us a break. We're going to take the opportunity where we can, with the change in the weather, the calmness," he said.

That area, too, has seen recent fire devastation. It was torched just two years ago by the deadly Carr Fire — infamously remembered for producing a huge tornado-like fire whirl.

Poor air quality expected to return to Central Valley early next week

By Quinn Wilson
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020

After a brief reprieve in recent days, more smoke-filled skies are on the horizon.

Courtesy of a high-pressure system and continued wildfires in all directions — including two new fires in northern California — smoke will build up throughout the Central Valley into the weekend and early next week, according to John Klassen, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's director of air quality science and planning.

"Thanks to the brief reprieve we had over the weekend and last week, smoke was able to disperse and wind pushed that smoke to the east towards Nevada," Klassen said. "Things are changing, temperatures are turning up and now smoke is coming closer to the valley floor instead of to the east."

Jamie Holt, the district's chief communications officer, explained that the high pressure system over the valley acts as a lid, leaving much of the smoke unable to escape.

"Like a jar that you keep adding more feathers to, the feathers would get more and more dense and pollution will have nowhere to go," Holt said.

Dan Harty, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Hanford, said that the high- pressure system is currently over most of the western United States and is expected to last through the weekend. Harty explained that thanks to a phenomenon known as "inversion," cool overnight temperatures cause smoke to drift over the valley and settle on the surface. Once settled, the smoke will need another weather system to clear the air.

"We're pretty much locked into the high pressure right now and it's going to pretty well remain stationary thorough the West," Harty said. "There might be some weakening this weekend as a system passes over the Pacific Northwest."

For eastern Kern County, similar air quality conditions are expected, according to Glen Stephens, an air quality control officer with the Eastern Kern Air Pollution Control District.

"Unfortunately, because of the way the winds are blowing from the valley into the east, we will experience the same poor air quality," Stephens said.

Stephens said his district put out an air quality alert for the month of September and will be making another one in the coming days. On Tuesday, the San Joaquin Valley air district reissued a health caution.

Klassen said that looking at air quality records, the San Joaquin Valley district had never seen this much of a high concentration of poor air quality days in a year before.

"This is the worst air quality wildfire period we've had," Klassen said. Stephens said this was the case for the eastern Kern district as well.

Holt reminded the public that the best way to handle poor air quality days are to stay inside. She said for individuals who have to work outside, check with OSHA's regulations that track whether people can work outside under poor air quality conditions.

The San Joaquin Valley district said conditions are expected to be similar throughout the valley with no notable differences in air quality. However, Holt said the poor air conditions are currently most notable around the valley's foothills and near the Clovis area.

Dying winds give crews hope in Northern California fires

By Janie Har, Associated Press
The Business Journal, Tuesday, September 29, 2020

(AP) — Easing winds gave California firefighters a break Tuesday as they battled a destructive wildfire that was driven by strong winds through wine country north of San Francisco and another rural blaze that killed three people.

Breezes replaced the powerful gusts that sent the Glass Fire raging through Napa and Sonoma counties Sunday and Monday, scorching more than 66 square miles (170 square kilometers).

At least 95 buildings have burned in wine country, including homes and winery installations. A wildfire burning farther north in rural Shasta County has destroyed another 146 buildings.

The fire in wine country pushed through brush that had not burned for a century, even though surrounding areas were incinerated in a series of blazes in recent years.

As the winds eased Monday evening, firefighters were feeling “much more confident,” said Ben Nicholls, a division chief with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, known as Cal Fire.

“We don’t have those critical burning conditions that we were experiencing those last two nights,” he said.

The Glass Fire in wine country is one of nearly 30 wildfires burning around California. The National Weather Service warned that hot, dry conditions with strong Santa Ana winds could continue posing a fire danger in Southern California through Tuesday afternoon.

In a forested far northern part of the state, more than 1,200 people were evacuated in Shasta County for the Zogg Fire, which has burned at least 62 square miles (160 square kilometers).

Three people have died in the fire, Shasta County Sheriff Eric Magrini said Monday. He gave no details but urged people who receive evacuation orders: “Do not wait.”

Numerous studies in recent years have linked bigger wildfires in America to climate change from the burning of coal, oil and gas. Scientists say climate change has made California much drier, meaning trees and other plants are more flammable.

Residences are widely scattered in Shasta County, which was torched just two years ago by the deadly Carr Fire — infamously remembered for producing a huge tornado-like fire whirl.

The Pacific Gas & Electric utility had cut power to more than 100,000 customers in advance of gusty winds and in areas with active fire zones. The utility’s equipment has caused previous disasters, including the 2018 Camp Fire that killed 85 people and devastated the town of Paradise in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

By Monday night, the utility said it had restored electricity to essentially all of those customers. However, PG&E said about 24,000 people remained without power in areas affected by two fires in Napa, Sonoma, Shasta and Tehama counties.

So far in this year’s historic fire season, more than 8,100 California wildfires have killed 29 people, scorched 5,780 square miles (14,970 square kilometers) and destroyed more than 7,000 buildings.

The Glass Fire began Sunday as three fires merged and drove into vineyards and mountain areas, including part of the city of Santa Rosa. About 70,000 people were under evacuation orders, including the entire 5,000-plus population of Calistoga in Napa County.

Some people were injured and Sonoma County sheriff’s deputies had to rescue people who ignored evacuation orders, officials said.

Sonoma County Supervisor Susan Gorin, who lives in Santa Rosa, said she was stuck in two hours of heavy traffic Monday night to reach safety.

Gorin’s home was damaged in another fire three years ago and she was rebuilding it. She saw three neighboring houses in flames as she fled.

“We’re experienced with that,” she said of the fires. “Once you lose a house and represent thousands of folks who’ve lost homes, you become pretty fatalistic that this is a new way of life and, depressingly, a normal way of life, the megafires that are spreading throughout the West.”

Gorin said it appeared the fire in her area was sparked by embers from the Glass Fire.

Ed Yarbrough, a wildfire evacuee from St. Helena in Napa County, watched firefighters douse flames across from his house Monday.

"I can see in the distance that it looks like it's intact," he said but said spot fires were still being doused.

"So I know we're not really out of the woods yet, and the woods can burn," he said.

The fires came as the region approaches the anniversary of the 2017 fires, including one that killed 22 people. Just a month ago, many of those same residents were evacuated from the path of a lightning-sparked fire that became the fourth-largest in state history.

"Our firefighters have not had much of a break, and these residents have not had much of a break," said Daniel Berlant, an assistant deputy director with Cal Fire.

Officials did not have an estimate of the number of homes destroyed or burned, but the blaze engulfed the Chateau Boswell Winery in St. Helena and at least one five-star resort.

A drive through the Napa Valley shows impacts of Glass Fire

Barry Eberling, Napa News

Tracy Press, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020

Castello di Amorosa president Georg Salzner walked along the Glass Fire-scarred property on Tuesday and said the winery could reopen when the evacuation order is lifted.

The Glass Fire reduced one of the property's imposing buildings to a gutted, fortress-like shell. Still, the adjacent medieval Tuscan castle-like winery looked untouched, with sheep wandering on green grass near its stone walls.

"There's not one scratch on the main building," Salzner said.

That mixed outcome seemed like a microcosm of the upper Napa Valley as a whole. The Glass Fire blackened the landscape and torched buildings in some areas while sparing wineries, vineyards, homes and oaks in others.

Taking a grand tour of upper Napa Valley isn't so magical amid the Glass Fire's smoky shroud. A drive up Silverado Trail, through Calistoga and down Highway 29 on Tuesday morning showed wine country as wildfire country.

The fire still burned. Smoke and occasional flames visible along the main roads were reminders, as well as convoys of fire engines. Most of the action seemed to be in the surrounding hills, not in the valley.

Meadowood resort still had many of its lodges on oak-sprinkled hills. But the building that housed the resort's three-Michelin-star restaurant and conference center had been so destroyed that it was impossible to imagine what it had once looked like. Firefighters tackled hot spots on the property.

Further up Silverado Trail, a small house had been destroyed, a plastic, orange, smiling Halloween pumpkin remaining on the front steps. Not everything in wine country is imposing.

Most structures at Davis Estates winery remained, including the windmill in front of the winery. But at least one structure had been destroyed and an array of solar panels along a vineyard had been melted like so much cheap plastic.

Calistoga Mayor Chris Canning stood in a parking lot on the main street of his evacuated city. The fire hadn't entered city limits, but was less than a quarter-mile away, he said.

The Tubbs fire of 2017 was big, scary and fast. Proximity for this one is the disturbing part, he said. Still, he noted the lack of wind.

"We're feeling pretty good right now," he said.

Calistoga looked like a hazy ghost town. Canning described the air quality as being "beyond unhealthy."

Heading south on Highway 29, the smoke grew even thicker. Flames lapped along a roadside hill. A line of fire trucks drove out of the brown haze ahead.

All of this was near the entrance to Bothe-Napa Valley State Park, one of the area's popular camping and hiking areas where redwoods line Ritchey Creek. Parts of the park visible from road hadn't burned.

Further south, the 36-foot wooden water wheel of the historic Bale Grist mill could be seen. Major wineries such as Freemark Abbey and Beringer remained.

Some of the major damage inflicted by the fire is away from Silverado Trail and Highway 29. The fire destroyed homes in Deer Park area and wreaked havoc at Calistoga Ranch resort.

Despite the fire damage, upper Napa Valley as of Tuesday was far from a Mordor-like setting. Acres of vineyards still spread across valley floor like a garden, their beauty tempered by the smoke of a still raging wildfire.

The 42,560-acre Glass Fire had zero containment at that time. The fiery siege of upper Napa Valley, though on this particular morning not appearing to be chaotic, had yet to end.

Air pollution director: 'This is the worst air quality wildfire period that we've ever had'

By Vongni Yang

Visalia Times-Delta, Tuesday, September 29, 2020

A record wildfire season caused the worst air quality local air officials say they have ever seen.

In a Zoom media briefing on Tuesday, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District director of air quality and science Jon Klassen addressed the region's poor air quality.

Five of the state's largest fires in California history were recorded this year, polluting the air with high concentrations of particulate matter, Klassen said.

The Creek Fire, which burned 305,240 acres in Fresno and Madera counties and is currently 44% contained, is now the largest wildfire in state history.

Air officials said multiple large wildfires have caused unhealthy air quality in the Central Valley for weeks now.

The district reissued another health caution Tuesday, alerting residents of the increasing health impacts from exposure to unhealthy air quality and particulate matter emissions. The health caution will remain in place until wildfires are extinguished.

Exposure to the bad air can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis, and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.

"Looking back at the records, we've not had this widespread of an air quality issue, high concentrations everywhere, Valley-wide for weeks and weeks and weeks," Klassen said. "This has been really exceptional. This is the worst air quality wildfire period that we've ever had."

Currently, the Central San Joaquin Valley is surrounded by wildfires to the west, east, north and south.

The Sequoia Complex Fire in Tulare County has torched 150,800 acres, contributing to the bad air.

The smoke from the wildfires is being trapped in the Valley air basin, said Jamie Holt, the district's chief communications officer.

Valley counties impacted by wildfire smoke include San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings and Tulare counties, and parts of Kern County.

The district does not see the air quality improving any time soon.

"It's just going to continue to build over the coming days," Klassen said. "High-pressure, day by day. I'm expecting the particulate matter to continue to increase each day as we get into early next week. I can say by early next week we may see some of the worst of it before things change."

Because of the unhealthy air quality, air officials reminded residents to stay indoors if possible.

District officials are encouraging Valley residents to exercise indoors, limit outdoor activities and replace the air filter in their homes and cars.

A COVID-19 mask or face shield will also not protect you from the bad air, Holt said.

"The smoke that we're seeing, the small particulate matter can get around the mask and get into your lungs and get into your bloodstream," she added. "It can cause a whole variety of issues."

Residents can track air quality online or by downloading the free "Valley Air" application on their mobile device. Wildfire information is also available at the district's website.

Creek Fire updates: More Fresno County evacuations lifted; containment tops 40%

By Joshua Tehee

Fresno Bee, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020

In just under one month, the Creek Fire has burned more than 300,000 acres along both sides of the San Joaquin River near Mammoth Pool, Shaver Lake, Big Creek and Huntington Lake.

It is the largest single-fire incident in California history and the sixth largest when including complex fires, like the North Complex Fire currently burning in Plumas and Butte counties.

As of Tuesday afternoon, the Creek Fire since sparking Sept. 4 had consumed 305,249 acres and was 44% contained.

It was at 304,604 acres and 39% containment Monday night. The cause remains under investigation.

There currently are 3,675 personnel working the situation.

- Containment of the nearby SQF Complex Fire, which includes the Castle and Shotgun fires, shot up by 8% percent on Monday night. As of Tuesday morning, CalFire reported 58% containment. The fire has been burning in and near the Sequoia National Park and forest for more than a month and has scorched 150,800 acres.

- The Bullfrog Fire continues to be monitored east of Shaver Lake near Courtright Reservoir. As of Monday night, it had burned 1,185 acres and was 50% contained.

4:30 p.m.: Re-entry to property for certain owners

Residents in zones F9C and F9D who had their homes destroyed will be granted temporary access to their properties Wednesday.

Check-in to receive a pass begins at 8 a.m. at Foothill Elementary School (29147 Auberry Road). Passes will not be issued after 1 p.m.

The sheriff's office said that all must be checked out by 4 p.m.

Those with property in zones F9C and F9D but whose home was not destroyed will not be admitted.

Official identification and a document providing residency, such as a driver's license, is required to receive a pass.

2:10 p.m.: More evacuation notices lifted; land and road closures continue in national forests

Evacuation orders were lifted for 10 more areas of Fresno County on Tuesday. They include zones F7AA, F7G, F9A, F9I, F9J, F9k, F9L, and F10C, F10D and F10E. All evacuation orders and corresponding zones can be viewed online on the Creek Fire evacuation map.

While these zones are now open, some of them may be impacted by closure orders the U.S. Forest Service has in place for lands and roads with Sequoia and Sierra national forests. Those orders were extended last week and are in place until Sept. 30.

Those returning into those areas should identify where they need to go ahead of time so they do not run into unexpected restrictions.

12:45 p.m.: Valley air at its 'worst'

The Valley Air District on Tuesday declared air quality in the central San Joaquin Valley has never been worse and urged residents to stay indoors.

“This has been really exceptional, and I would say this is the worst air quality wildfire period that we’ve ever had,” said Jon Klassen, director of air quality science and planning, during a video news conference.

While predictions called for moderate air quality, Fresno found itself with deteriorating air quality on Tuesday. As of 12:45 p.m., the Air Quality Index was at 161, in the unhealthy range. The level of PM2.5 particulates jumped into level four. Everyone should avoid prolonged or vigorous outdoor activities.

12:30 p.m.: Evacuation orders lifted for two more areas in Fresno County

The Fresno County Sheriff’s Office announced evacuation orders have been lifted for two more areas within the Creek Fire.

They include Zone F1O along Peterson Road and F7E, which contains Big Creek and the Big Creek Edison Hydroelectric Plant and both sides of Huntington Lake Road from Camp Sierra Road to Stump Springs Road in the north.

The sheriff also announced the closure of Huntington Lake Road at Musick Peak Road and Highway 168 at South Fork Tamarack Creek.

The full evacuation map with zone designations can be found online.

Those returning to the area are encouraged to drive slowly and obey traffic controls. Fire crews and utility companies are still in the area. Watch for trees and electric poles with deep charring. They should be considered hazardous.

10:45 a.m.: Crews work to keep fire north of Kaiser Pass

Thanks to changing weather conditions Monday, the Creek Fire saw activity on its eastern portion near the 80 Road and Potter Pass. The goal Tuesday is to keep the fire north of Kaiser Pass, though progression is expected to slow as the fire moves into the Ansel Adams Wilderness, where there is less fuel.

In the northern zone of the fire on Monday, a two-acre section of slop-over was quickly incorporated into the fire line and a one-acre spot fire west of Whiskey Falls Campground was contained with the help of helicopter water drops. The area east of Central Camp and south of Little Shuteye Peak continues to be monitored Tuesday. The fire has been hung up in the rocks in that location for nine days.

In the Ansel Adams Wilderness, spot fires are occurring on the northwest side of the fire, torching pockets of vegetation interspersed within the granite, though the fire activity occurring on the northern end of the fire is very light, according to a CalFire update.

Cattle in and around the fire area are being rounded up and moved and those in the area should be aware of cattle, those working with cattle, fire personnel and other hazardous conditions when returning to the fire area once it re-opens.

9 a.m.: Fire, containment grows overnight

The Creek Fire grew by more than 600 acres Monday night and into Tuesday morning, while containment on the fire grew by 5%, according to CalFire update. As of Tuesday, the fire has burned 305,240 and is 44% contained.

8:15 a.m.: Air quality begins to dip in Fresno

Smoke will continue to affect the Valley’s air quality through the week. How bad those affects will be depends on the fire activity close to home and whether the transport of smoke from distant fires makes it this way, according to the National Weather service forecast discussion for Tuesday.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is predicting moderate air quality for the bulk of the region on Tuesday, save for Tulare and Kern counties, which are expecting air that is unhealthy for sensitive groups. The air quality in Sequoia National Park and Forest areas is predicted to be unhealthy.

That’s already proving to be somewhat wishful, as the Air Quality Index in Fresno reached 122 on Tuesday morning, a level that is unhealthy for those in sensitive groups. The PM2.5 particulate level in

Fresno pushed just into level three, the highest it has been in nearly a week. Sensitive individuals should exercise indoors or avoid vigorous outdoor activities.