

## **Creek Fire update: Recent snow helped. Here's why containment could be stalled for months**

By Manuela Tobias

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The Creek Fire continued to inch towards full containment this week as fire managers assessed recent storm impacts.

Firefighters planned to flyover the blaze Thursday to inspect the northern portion of the fire.

The fire stood at 379,895 acres on Thursday morning.

"One storm is good, but multiple storms is better," said Kaleena Lynde, public information officer with the Creek Fire. "So now that we've had another storm, we're going to check that containment and continue to bring it up."

Estimated full containment remains at Nov. 30 on the U.S. Forest Service update. But Lynde said that depends on whether more snow falls by then.

If it doesn't, rather than claiming victory too early, fire managers would prefer to push back the containment date in case a dry spell hits the area, which could melt the snow and open up the possibility for limited but continued burning through December and into January.

"That's a lot worse than being able to keep it at 95, 97% (containment) and continuing to monitor it through the winter," she said.

On Thursday morning, personnel also planned to assess the condition of the roads and work on rehabilitation services in the Powerhouse Road area.

But the roads were too icy, muddy, and wet to go beyond that into higher elevations, Lynde said. Equipment could get stuck for the winter if a bigger storm comes through.

The Sierra National Forest closure remains in effect through Nov. 24.

### **Help for Creek Fire victims**

A FEMA Mobile Registration Intake Center opened in Madera County on Tuesday, Nov. 17, for five days to serve wildfire survivors.

The center is at Mountain Christian Center Church, 40299 Highway 49, Oakhurst, CA 96344, and its hours are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. through Saturday, Nov. 21.

Survivors who register with FEMA can learn if they qualify for financial assistance, such as home repairs or home replacement, transportation needs, and medical expenses. You can also register at [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://www.disasterassistance.gov), the FEMA app, or the helpline at 800-621-3362. The deadline to register is Dec. 16, 2020.

### **SQF Complex Fire update**

In the Sequoia National Forest, the SQF Complex Fire has now reached 90% containment, as of Thursday morning, and had burned 174,178 acres.

The fire edges are in remote locations and at higher elevations, so full containment "is not expected until it can be assessed on the ground," according to the morning update. But fire managers don't expect any further spread thanks to natural barriers and winter conditions.

Fireline repairs using heavy equipment are nearing completion because of the hazardous winter conditions. Officials will return in the spring to continue those repairs. Crews are making "good progress" on road-side chipping, which will last all winter, as conditions allow.

The Sequoia National Forest and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks have taken over command of the fire. Only 60 people are now working on it.

An Interagency Emergency Task Force is cleaning debris and establishing trigger points for flash floods and debris flow.