

## **Fueled by winds, Dixie Fire grows by nearly 6,000 acres overnight**

By Omar Shaikh Rashad

San Francisco Chronicle, Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021

Fanned by gusting winds and low humidity, the Dixie Fire — now the second largest wildfire in California's history — grew by nearly 6,000 acres overnight Monday.

By Tuesday morning, the blaze was reported at 487,764 acres and was 25% contained.

The Dixie Fire's growth Monday was a significant uptick compared to a day earlier, when more favorable conditions prevented the fire's growth overnight Sunday, according to Cal Fire measurements.

Cal Fire reported that thick smoke reduced visibility considerably on the eastern and western sides of the blaze, making firefighting conditions more difficult.

The prospect of warming temperatures could aid the fire's growth in the coming days.

So far, the Dixie Fire has destroyed 893 structures and damaged 61 others. More than 16,000 structures remain threatened by the blaze.

The fire has no fatalities or injuries among civilians but it has injured three firefighters.

## **Progress made but hot weather could spur California wildfire**

By Christopher Weber and Jonathan J. Cooper, Associated Press

Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021

California's largest single wildfire in recorded history kept pushing through forestlands as fire crews tried to protect rural communities from flames that have destroyed hundreds of homes.

Thick smoke cleared for several hours along one edge of the Dixie Fire on Monday, allowing aircraft to join nearly 6,000 firefighters in the attack. Many were battling to protect more than a dozen small mountain and rural communities in the northern Sierra Nevada.

"Today was the first day in a few days that we had good, clean air in there so we were able to use our helicopters," allowing some progress, Kyle Jacobson, the east zone incident commander, said at an evening briefing.

Crews managed to cut thousands of acres of new fire lines and the fire's southern edges were in good shape but the fire's future was an unknown, authorities said.

"We don't know where this fire is going to end and where it's going to land. It continues to challenge us," said Chris Carlton, supervisor for Plumas National Forest.

But high pressure building over the Western United States meant the weather would heat up and dry out again in the next few days, possibly hitting triple-digit high temperatures on Wednesday and Thursday along with a return of strong afternoon winds, fire meteorologist Rich Thompson warned.

Those are the conditions that have caused the fire to spread rapidly since it began on July 13. Burning through bone-dry trees, brush and grass, the fire had burned more than 600 homes and other buildings, incinerating much of the small community of Greenville. Another 14,000 structures were threatened.

Damage reports are preliminary because assessment teams can't get into many areas, officials said.

Even more troubling, monsoonal moisture coming up from the south could produce a chance of thunderstorms heading into the weekend that could bring dry lightning and gusts that produce a greater fire threat, Thompson said.

The fire had grown to an area of 753 square miles (1,950 square kilometers) and was just 22% contained, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. It had scorched an area more than twice the size of New York City.

The Dixie Fire is about half the size of the August Complex, a series of lightning-caused 2020 fires across seven counties that were fought together and that state officials consider California's largest wildfire overall.

Four firefighters were taken to the hospital Friday after being struck by a fallen branch. More than 30 people were initially reported missing, but by Monday the Plumas County Sheriff's Office had accounted for all of them.

California's raging wildfires are among some 100 large blazes burning across 15 states, mostly in the West, where historic drought conditions have left lands parched and ripe for ignition.

The Dixie Fire was the largest wildfire burning in the U.S. Nearly a quarter of all firefighters assigned to Western fires are fighting California blazes, said Rocky Oplinger, an incident commander.

Heat waves and historic drought tied to climate change have made wildfires harder to fight in the American West. Scientists have said climate change has made the region much warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make the weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive. The fires across the West come as parts of Europe are also fighting large blazes spurred by tinder-dry conditions.

The fire's cause was under investigation. Pacific Gas & Electric has said it may have been sparked when a tree fell on one of its power lines. A federal judge ordered PG&E on Friday to give details by Aug. 16 about the equipment and vegetation where the fire started.

Northwest of the Dixie Fire in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, hundreds of homes remained threatened by two fires that continued to grow. About a third of the McFarland Fire was contained. New evacuation orders were issued Monday for residents near the Monument Fire, which was only about 3% contained.

South of the Dixie Fire, firefighters prevented further growth of the River Fire, which broke out Wednesday near the community of Colfax and destroyed 68 homes.

## **Dixie Fire growth stalls, but midweek warming trend looms**

By Sarah Ravani

San Francisco Chronicle, Monday, Aug. 9, 2021

Firefighters gained a slight upper hand Monday on the Dixie Fire, now the second largest wildfire in California's history, though warmer weather conditions threatened to fuel more explosive behavior by midweek, officials said.

The blaze, which started on July 13 and has burned through four counties, had a total acreage of 482,047 — slightly less than the previous day, but that discrepancy is due to more accurate mapping after the smoke cleared, said Hector Vasquez, a spokesman for the Forest Service.

The containment of the blaze increased to 22% from 21%.

The blaze was possibly sparked by a tree that fell on a Pacific Gas and Electric Co. power line, the company said.

Vasquez said firefighters made gains Monday due to the smoke clearing.

"The better weather actually allowed us to have air support up to assist the crews that were down below fighting the fire, which is a huge plus on the incident," he said.

A total of 682 structures have been destroyed, 249 of which are "minor structures," and 45 other structures have been damaged, Cal Fire said. More than 16,000 structures remain threatened.

The Plumas County Sheriff's Office said Monday that all people who had been unaccounted for have been safely located.

Nearly 6,000 firefighters, 30 helicopters, 129 bulldozers, 135 water tenders and 525 engines are battling the Dixie Fire. Three firefighters have been injured battling the blaze, though their conditions were not immediately available.

The fire, now burning across Plumas, Butte, Tehama and Lassen counties, has also destroyed the historic Gold Rush town of Greenville. All evacuation orders remain in place.

On the western side of the blaze, fire behavior remained active as firefighters worked on securing containment lines around the fire perimeter and saving structures, according to Cal Fire.

On the eastern side of the blaze, Cal Fire said fire behavior is expected to worsen due to a warming trend expected midweek. The Dixie Fire is currently moving toward containment lines, but firefighters are working to secure them. Crews are also focused on constructing and reinforcing containment lines in the fire scar areas, Cal Fire said.

“They are patrolling those areas where they have some containment,” said Jacob Gilliam, a spokesman for Cal Fire. “They are trying to get around this thing and they are protecting the communities that are at risk.”

## **Fires ravaging in northern California worsen Kern's air quality**

By Ishani Desai

Bakersfield Californian, Monday, Aug. 9, 2021

Light brown air seeped into the San Joaquin Valley and Bakersfield over the weekend, prompting the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to issue a health caution Friday that warned respiratory issues could be triggered for qualifying individuals.

“The health caution will remain in place until the fires are extinguished, or until smoke is no longer affecting the Valley,” said the SJVAPCD in a news release.

Bakersfield is no stranger to bad air quality days. The American Lung Association, in its State of the Air 2021 report, ranked Bakersfield number two on the list of cities most polluted by ozone and number one on the list of cities plagued yearly by particulate matter.

However, conditions sparked by the multiple conflagrations ravaging through Northern California add onto the already horrible air quality in the San Joaquin Valley.

The pollution stifling Bakersfield is a combination of ozone and particulate matter from the Dixie Fire, which has burned almost 500,000 acres and is 21 percent contained, along with the River Fire, Lava Fire, Antelope Fire and many more, according to SJVAPCD.

Particulate matter consists of smoke and dust particles smaller than the diameter of one strand of human hair. These toxins can deeply penetrate the lungs and cause harm, said the district in an informational document.

On Friday, the average particulate matter hovered around 20 particulate matter (PM) micrograms per cubic meter, according to the SJVAPCD website. Particulate matter is one aspect used to calculate the Air Quality Index; the AQI measures pollution in the air and categorizes the air through five levels; a level one designation recommends outdoor activity for all and level five recommends all should avoid any outdoor activity.

The particulate matter levels Friday ranked around level two, which warns sensitive individuals to reduce prolonged outdoor activity. However, around noon, the particulate matter exponentially increased to 109 PM, qualifying to be above level five. Around 2 p.m., particulate matter decreased to 14 PM, according to the SJV Air District's website.

Particulate matter Saturday from 6 p.m. to midnight reached almost 120 PM, according to the SJVAPCD website. Throughout Sunday, the particulates hovered between levels three and five, only dropping to level two around 11 p.m. Sunday. On Monday, PM reached level three around 8 a.m. and then wavered between levels three and two throughout the day, according to the SJVAPCD website.

Treacherously, particulate matter has “no rhyme or reason” and spikes according to weather patterns, said Heather Heinks, the outreach and communications manager at the district.

Shifts in weather prompted the SJVAPCD to issue the health caution, Heinks said. Smoke billowed across the valley and eventually began to drop into lower elevations Saturday and Sunday. When the air cools at night, hot smoke sinks to the ground and creates the hazy conditions, Heinks added.

San Joaquin Valley's bowl-like shape holds the smoke, making it harder to dissipate, Heinks said. Only through rain or wind will the deadly pollution loosen its grip on this region, she added.

The real danger comes from the particulate matter being breathed into the lungs, Heinks said.

Dr. Paula Ardron, specializing in allergy and immunology at Kaiser Permanente, said airways in the lungs act as a filter to trap debris. Individuals with asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease already have inflammation. Breathing in pollution can further block inhalation and trigger coughing, wheezing and chest tightness, Ardron added.

"They're much more sensitive," Ardron said. "Even moderate amounts of air pollution due to smoke or smog can set them off and cause them to have coughing."

Ardron said she has seen an uptick in patients arriving to ameliorate respiratory problems.

SJVAPCD recommends staying inside and changing the air filters in air conditioners to ensure particulates remain outside the residence. Using an air purifier can also remove toxic materials from the atmosphere. Wearing an N95 mask, not a cloth mask, can also provide relief to those suffering from respiratory ailments.

## **Wildfires push 'harmful' smoke toward Visalia, San Joaquin Valley**

By Joshua Yeager

Visalia Times-Delta, Monday, Aug. 9, 2021

There are more than 20 wildfires now burning across the Sierra Nevada, filling lungs on the San Joaquin Valley floor with some of the unhealthiest air in the world.

Over the weekend, Valley air officials urged residents to stay indoors and avoid physical activity as satellites captured images of smoke pooling across central California visible from outer space.

"It's kind of like fog in the wintertime. Once smoke gets in here [on the Valley floor], it's hard to get it out of here," said Jeff Barlow, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service Hanford office.

The health advisory will remain in place until smoke is no longer affecting the Valley, which may not happen until the fires are extinguished. Dangerous particulate matter emissions can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.

People with respiratory conditions, including COVID-19, young children and the elderly are especially susceptible to the health effects of particulate pollution. Cloth and paper masks worn as protection from COVID-19 are not sufficient to filter out the harmful particles caused by wildfire smoke, said Heather Heinks, a San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District spokesperson.

Poor air quality peaked in Tulare County on Sunday with visibility reduced to just 7 miles. Other parts of the Valley measured visibility as low as 3 miles.

Conditions are expected to improve late Monday and Tuesday as winds reverse and begin to push the smoke away from the Valley. But with the clearing of smoke will come warmer temperatures, said Barlow, the NWS meteorologist.

"It's kind of a double-edged sword. After [Monday night], we'll see things clearing out but with that comes warmer temperatures," he said. "We get cooler temperatures with the northwestern flow but lots of smoke blowing from Northern California."

Expect temperatures between 100 and 105 by Wednesday through the end of the week, he said.

On the bright side, some moisture could return to the upper ranges of the Sierra. There is a slight chance of showers in the Tulare County mountains this week, Barlow said.

Clearer skies will aid firefighters in Northern California and the Pacific Northwest, with aircraft able to rejoin the fight against the massive Dixie Fire on Monday.

The Dixie Fire, named for the road where it started nearly four weeks ago, grew to an area of 765 square miles by Sunday evening and was just 21% contained, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. It had scorched an area more than twice the size of New York City.

The blaze became the largest single fire in California's recorded history, surpassing last year's Creek Fire in the Sierra National Forest.

Fueled by powerful gusts and bone-dry vegetation, the fire incinerated much of the small community of Greenville last Wednesday and Thursday. At least 627 homes and other structures had been destroyed by Monday and another 14,000 buildings were still threatened in the northern Sierra Nevada.

Gov. Gavin Newsom surveyed the damage in Greenville over the weekend, writing on Twitter that “our hearts ache for this town.”

“These are climate-induced wildfires and we have to acknowledge that we have the capacity in not just the state but in this country to solve this,” Newsom said on CNN.

Heat waves and historic drought tied to climate change have made wildfires harder to fight in the American West. Scientists have said climate change has made the region much warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make the weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

California’s fire season is on track to surpass last year’s season, which was the worst in recent recorded state history.

Since the start of the year, more than 6,000 blazes have destroyed more than 1,260 square miles of land — more than triple the losses for the same period in 2020, according to state fire figures.

California’s raging wildfires were among 107 large fires burning across 14 states, mostly in the West, where historic drought conditions have left lands parched and ripe for ignition.

## **Dixie Fire now second-largest wildfire in California state history. Here’s what we know**

By Vincent Moleski and Amelia Davidson  
Merced Sun-Star, Monday, Aug. 9, 2021

The Dixie Fire, burning in Butte and Plumas counties, expanded an additional 16,000 acres heading into Monday after becoming the second-largest wildfire in state history over the weekend.

The blaze has charred 489,287 acres (764 square miles) as of Monday morning. It surpassed the Mendocino Complex, which burned 459,123 acres in 2018 in Mendocino County and surrounding areas. Still at the top of the state’s list of largest fires is 2020’s August Complex, which charred 1,032,648 acres.

The Dixie Fire does not, however, count as the state’s largest single fire. Cal Fire’s northern region spokesman Capt. Robert Foxworthy told The Sacramento Bee that the 2020 Creek Fire remains the largest single fire at 379,895 acres. The Dixie Fire merged with the Fly Fire late in July, which means it is not considered a single fire, according to Foxworthy.

The Dixie Fire, 21% contained, has destroyed 433 buildings, plus 249 minor structures, and damaged 45 additional structures. As of Sunday, 16,035 homes and businesses remain threatened.

A Cal Fire Butte unit morning update said that growth in parts of the fire remained “moderate” overnight due to a smoke layer from fires farther north. But officials added that the smoke inversion is expected to lift Monday, returning the fire to more active behavior levels.

“Fire behavior is expected to increase with clear air and a warming trend that is forecasted to peak mid-week,” wrote the state fire agency in their morning update.

The fire’s growth has slowed significantly, when the blaze added 110,000 acres in a single day on Friday. On Wednesday, the fire tore through Greenville, destroying most of the Northern California town. Canyondam was also burned on Thursday.

### **Weather will be a factor this week**

In a weekend visit to the remains of the town of Greenville, Gov. Gavin Newsom likened the destruction to that seen in the town of Paradise during the deadly 2018 Camp Fire. The governor said that the state would continue to engage in forest and vegetation management in an attempt to prevent wildfires like the Dixie Fire. But he also called on Californians to recognize that fires like these are a result of climate change.

“Extreme weather conditions and extreme drought conditions are leading to extreme conditions and wildfire challenges the likes of which we have never seen in our history,” Newsom said in a video news release filmed in Greenville. “And as a consequence we need to acknowledge, just straight up, these are climate-induced wildfires.”

Cal Fire’s damage assessment map shows a few structures destroyed in the south of Chester, near the intersection of Highways 89 and 36, although the center of the town shows no losses. Several structures are listed as destroyed on the map in a community near Warner Creek Campground.

Satellite data showed the majority of the fire’s spread through the weekend was to the north and northeast, according to the National Weather Service’s Sacramento office.

Cal Fire officials will prioritize structure protection Monday as they gear up for another potential flare-up this week. For now, moderate temperatures and smoke shade from wildfires further north are providing a brief respite for crews.

“Crews will continue to fight fire aggressively, construct direct, and indirect line to secure the fire perimeter,” Cal Fire wrote in their Monday morning update. “All resources are committed to structure defense in affected communities.”

### **All missing people accounted for**

The Plumas County Sheriff’s Office originally reported 31 people to be missing from the Greenville area after the fire burned through. But as of Monday morning, a spokeswoman from the Sheriff’s Office told The Bee that all 31 people were found.

Many areas near the fire remain under evacuation orders. Plumas County residents from the county’s northwestern edge nearly to Quincy are evacuated. The northeastern tip of Butte County and the far eastern edge of Tehama County are also under mandatory evacuation orders. Local officials have an online map available with more details on evacuation orders and warnings.

A total of 5,813 fire personnel are assigned to the Dixie Fire, plus 30 helicopters and 525 engines. Three firefighters have been injured, according to Cal Fire’s morning update.

### **Report: Judge wants answers from PG&E**

The Bay Area News Group reported that a federal judge has asked Pacific Gas and Electric to explain the utility’s role in the Dixie Fire.

Although the cause of the Dixie Fire is still under investigation, just a few days after the fire started on July 14, PG&E released a report suggesting that its equipment may have sparked the fire.

On Friday, U.S. District Judge William Alsup told PG&E that it has until Aug. 16 to provide details including video footage regarding its possible role in starting the Dixie and Fly fires, and must also identify any other fires from this year that it may have started, according to the Bay Area News Group.

Last week, PG&E told the Public Utilities Commission that a tree was found lying on its transmission equipment near the area where the Plumas County fire started on July 22.

The utility was found criminally responsible for 2018’s Camp Fire, which killed 85 people in Butte County, and has been found responsible for several other wildfires, including the 2019 Kincadee Fire and 2020’s Zogg Fire.

The Bay Area News Group reported that PG&E said it will meet the judge’s deadline.

### **Skies clear, allowing aircraft to help fight California fire**

By Christopher Weber and Jonathan J. Cooper, Associated Press  
Bakersfield Californian, Monday, Aug 9, 2021

Thick smoke that held down winds and temperatures in the zone of the largest single wildfire in California history cleared Monday from scenic Northern California forestlands, allowing firefighting aircraft to rejoin the battle to contain the massive Dixie Fire.

The newly clear skies will allow more than two dozen helicopters and two air tankers that have been grounded to fly again and make it safer for ground crews to maneuver.

“With this kind of weather, fire activity will pick up. But the good thing is we can get aircraft up,” said fire spokesman Ryan Bain.

Winds were not expected to reach the ferocious speeds that helped the blaze explode in size last week. But they were still a concern for firefighters working in unprecedented conditions to protect thousands of threatened homes.

Fueled by powerful gusts and bone-dry vegetation, the fire incinerated much of the small community of Greenville last Wednesday and Thursday. At least 627 homes and other structures had been destroyed by Monday and another 14,000 buildings were still threatened in the northern Sierra Nevada.

Damage reports are preliminary because assessment teams can't get into many areas, officials said.

The Dixie Fire, named for the road where it started nearly four weeks ago, grew to an area of 765 square miles (1,980 square kilometers) by Sunday evening and was just 21% contained, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. It had scorched an area more than twice the size of New York City.

With smoke clearing out above eastern portions of the fire, crews that had been directly attacking the front lines would be forced to retreat and build containment lines farther back, said Dan McKeague, a fire information officer from the U.S. Forest Service.

The blaze became the largest single fire in California's recorded history, surpassing last year's Creek Fire in the the state's central valley agricultural region.

The Dixie Fire is about half the size of the August Complex, a series of lightning-caused 2020 fires across seven counties that were fought together and that state officials consider California's largest wildfire overall.

The fire's cause was under investigation. The Pacific Gas & Electric utility has said it may have been sparked when a tree fell on one of its power lines. A federal judge ordered PG&E on Friday to give details by Aug. 16 about the equipment and vegetation where the fire started.

Gov. Gavin Newsom surveyed the damage in Greenville over the weekend, writing on Twitter that “our hearts ache for this town.”

“These are climate-induced wildfires and we have to acknowledge that we have the capacity in not just the state but in this country to solve this,” Newsom said on CNN.

Heat waves and historic drought tied to climate change have made wildfires harder to fight in the American West. Scientists have said climate change has made the region much warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make the weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

Northwest of the Dixie Fire in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, hundreds of homes remained threatened by the McFarland and Monument fires. About a quarter of the McFarland Fire was contained and about 3% of the Monument Fire was contained.

South of the Dixie Fire, firefighters prevented further growth of the River Fire, which broke out Wednesday near the community of Colfax and destroyed 68 homes.

Smoke from wildfires burning in the U.S. West continues to flow into parts of Colorado and Utah, where the air quality in many areas was rated as unhealthy. Denver's air quality improved on Sunday, but the smoke wafting into Colorado and Utah has made the air there and in Salt Lake City among the worst in the world.

California's fire season is on track to surpass last year's season, which was the worst in recent recorded state history.

Since the start of the year, more than 6,000 blazes have destroyed more than 1,260 square miles (3,260 square kilometers) of land — more than triple the losses for the same period in 2020, according to state fire figures.

California's raging wildfires were among 107 large fires burning across 14 states, mostly in the West, where historic drought conditions have left lands parched and ripe for ignition.

## **Fresno and Merced to see relief from wildfire smoke. What about those triple digits?**

By Thaddeus Miller

Merced Sun-Star, Monday, Aug. 9, 2021

The next few days of forecasts show the potential for improved air quality in Fresno, Merced, and the San Joaquin Valley, but the conditions moving the smoke also will push up temperatures, forecasters say.

A high-pressure system from the south and southeast is expected to drive smoke from the state's wildfires out of the Valley, pushing it up north and improving air quality in the Valley, according to Colin McKellar, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Hanford.

"We're expecting a bit of a warm-up," he said.

Highs through the weekend are forecast to remain in the triple digits, close to 105, with lows in the mid-70s in the urban parts of Fresno and Merced but low 60s in rural areas.

The Merced-area tends to have cooler temperatures because of wind coming off of the delta, according to forecasters.

The highs in the Valley are above average for this time of year, but overnight lows remain closer to average conditions.

As the high-pressure system pushes smoke north in a clockwise fashion, McKellar said, it will drag tropical air up from south of the border. That comes with a 20% to 30% chance of showers and thunderstorms starting Wednesday in areas higher than 5,000 feet and continuing to the weekend.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has issued a health caution for potential smoke for the entire Valley, including Fresno Madera, Merced, Kings, Tulare, and Stanislaus counties. That remains in place until the fires are extinguished.

McKellar said the Valley did not see significant relief from wildfires last year until rainfall came late in the year.

"I would not be surprised if that was the case this year," he said.

## **6 firefighters injured as McFarland Fire continues to spread in Northern California**

By Zaeem Shaikh

The Sacramento Bee, Monday, Aug. 9, 2021

Six firefighters suffered burn injuries Friday while battling the McFarland Fire, which has continued to burn along three Northern California county lines.

A hand crew was working on the south side of the blaze when a spot fire jumped ahead of them, Forest Service officials said in a social media post. The firefighters suffered first- and minor-second-degree burns.

Officials said they were examined by medics, then sent to Redding for further evaluation. A physician saw four of the firefighters' injuries, and all six were released Saturday morning. According to the release, they'll all have a few days off before being released to return to work.

The McFarland Fire is burning south of Wildwood on the border of Shasta, Trinity and Tehama county lines. As of Sunday morning, it has charred 31,185 acres with 21% containment.

The lightning-caused fire continued to spread during the weekend, burning more than 7,000 acres since Thursday. A historic drought coupled with high temperatures and steep and difficult terrain have made conditions challenging.

In a Sunday morning update, the Shasta-Trinity National Forest said the blaze is continuing to spread to the east and southeast through dry fuels with a moderate rate of spread along with short to moderate spotting. The fire is well established in the middle fork of Beegum Creek, Pole Corral Creek and south of Dubakella Mountain.

On Saturday, the Forest Service said in a news release that national forest roads and trails close to the McFarland and Monument fires are closed to the public. The closure will expire Oct. 31.

“We do not make closure decisions lightly,” Forest Supervisor Rachel Birkey said in the release. “The erratic and extreme fire behavior we are witnessing on both fires requires that we employ an abundance of caution in our commitment to the safety of the public and our firefighters.”

An evacuation order is in place for the town of Wildwood. Those areas are Highway 36 at Wildwood Road and north on Wildwood Road for 10 miles. An evacuation center for residents is set up at First Baptist Church in Weaverville.

Evacuation warnings are also in these areas:

- Community of Post Mountain near the junction of Highway 36 and Highway 3
- Community of Trinity Pines
- Shields Road
- White Rock Road
- Harrison Gulch Road from Highway 36 to Deerlick Springs Road
- Community of Platina
- Both sides of Highway 36 from Sunday Gulch Road to the Shasta/Tehama County line
- All roads to the south of Highway 36 from Sunday Gulch to the Shasta/Tehama County line including Beegum Gorge Road, Platinum Lane, Secluded Glen Lane, Shady Nook Drive, Beegum Road

Due to the blaze, Highway 36 is closed from White Rock to the Highway 3 junction, and Wildwood Road is closed from Highway 36 to Highway 3, officials said.

Amanda Munsey, a spokesperson on the McFarland Fire, said a total of eight firefighters have been injured and two structures damaged. A total of 695 personnel are assigned to the blaze, according to the Forest Service.

## **Widfires causing smoke, poor air quality in Valley**

By Charles Whisnand

The Porterville Recorder, Monday, Aug. 9, 2021

No less than eight wildfires in Northern California we're causing smoke and poor air quality across the Valley over the weekend.

That was what was reported by the San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District which led the district to issue a health caution through at least 5 o.m. today.

Among the wildfires that's causing smoke and poor air quality is one of the largest wildfires in state history, the Dixie Fire which is burning in Butte and Plumas Counties. Fires in Tuolumne and Mariposa Counties were affecting air quality in the Valley as well.

The district stated the health caution would remain in effect until the fires were extinguished or smoke was no longer affecting the Valley. The District advised residents being impacted by smoke to stay indoors to reduce their exposure to particulate matter emissions.

Particulate matter can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis, and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Individuals with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate matter exposure. Those with existing respiratory conditions, including COVID-19, young children and the elderly, are especially susceptible to the health effects from this form of pollution.

Anyone experiencing poor air quality due to wildfire smoke should move to a filtered, air-conditioned environment with windows closed. Common cloth and paper masks being used as protection from COVID-19 may not be enough to protect from wildfire smoke.

The public can visit the District's Wildfire Information Page at [www.valleyair.org/wildfires](http://www.valleyair.org/wildfires) for details on current and recently past wildfires affecting the Valley. The site includes resources on how to protect oneself from exposure to wildfire smoke, including instructions on how to make a DIY air filter for one's home, links to foothill air monitors and the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN), allowing residents to track air quality at any Valley location.

The public can visit RAAN directly at [myRAAN.com](http://myRAAN.com) or use the "Valley Air" app, free to download on any mobile device.

For more information, visit [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org) or call a District office in Fresno (559-230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-392-5500).

## **Containment on California's River Fire rises as firefighters continue to mop up hot spots**

By Zaeem Shaikh

The Modesto Bee, Sunday, Aug. 8, 2021

Crews continue to make progress on containing the River Fire and total acreage burned remained unchanged.

Officials with Cal Fire's Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit said in a Sunday morning update that containment has increased to 62% on the 2,600-acre fire, up from 48% on Saturday. The blaze started Wednesday near the Bear River Campground.

The number of structures destroyed or damaged hasn't changed since Saturday, and damage assessment teams are still evaluating areas of the fire. Cal Fire said full containment of the River Fire is expected by Friday.

"Ground resources and crews will continue tactical patrols around all areas of the fire while mopping up remaining hot spots," officials said in the Sunday update.

Residents are now able to repopulate most areas as evacuations have been scaled back.

A Placer County evacuation order for the northern portion of Hillcrest Boulevard near Madrone Lane was lifted at 4 p.m. Sunday, Cal Fire NEU said. At this time, only residents can repopulate that area.

All evacuation warnings in Placer and Nevada counties have been lifted.

In Nevada County, evacuation orders are still in place for the areas of Mount Olive, Dog Bar Road, Mount Olive Road and Sierra Knoll Estates. Orders remain in Placer County for the areas near the Bear River, including Campbell Creek, Bear View Drive and the southern portion of Hillcrest Boulevard.

Residents of Placer County seeking shelter are now being asked to call 211, Cal Fire officials said. Bear River High School, 11130 Magnolia Road, is still an evacuation center for Nevada County residents.

Areas west of Aspen Gold and Silver Leaf drives are open, but those two streets are still closed. Mount Olive Road is open to through traffic, but Taylor Crossing Road, Clydesdale Road, Mountain Lion Road, Last Mile Drive, Deer Hollow Way, Ladera Lane and Meyer Road remain closed.

The River Fire spread quickly Wednesday, burning up to 1,400 acres within hours. The blaze destroyed several homes and numerous vehicles, especially in the Chicago Park area.

Two civilians and one firefighter have been injured. The number of personnel assigned has decreased to 523 from 744 on Saturday.

Several roadblocks near the blaze have also changed, allowing more residents to return home.

## **Dixie Fire now 2nd-largest wildfire in California history, sprawling across 4 counties**

By Emma Talley, Chase DiFelicianantonio  
San Francisco Chronicle, Sunday, Aug. 8, 2021

The Dixie Fire became the second-largest wildfire in state history on Sunday after gobbling an additional 15,000 acres to sprawl across 489,287 total acres in four Northern California counties, Cal Fire said. Containment of the blaze Sunday remained unchanged at 21%.

The huge fire burning across Plumas, Butte, Tehama and Lassen counties has destroyed 404 structures, including the historic Gold Rush town of Greenville, and damaged 27 others, a damage assessment finds. More than 5,000 firefighters were battling the blaze.

The Dixie Fire has only reinforced officials' concerns that this season — with severe drought, extreme weather and an abundance of dry fuels in the mix — could rival or exceed last year's record-shattering wildfire year. The already-monstrous fire would have to more than double in size, however, to top the state's largest-ever wildfire: the August Complex, which burned slightly over 1 million acres in 2020.

The Dixie Fire ignited on July 13, possibly sparked by a tree that fell on a Pacific Gas and Electric Co. power line, the company said. PG&E said its equipment also may have ignited the smaller Fly Fire, which merged with the Dixie Fire overnight on July 24.

Cal Fire said it does not consider the Dixie Fire a "fire complex," like the huge August, LNU, SCU and CZU fires caused by lightning sieges last year. According to the U.S. Forest Service, a fire complex is "two or more individual incidents located in the same general area which are assigned to a single incident commander or unified command."

That makes Dixie the largest non-complex fire in California history, according to Cal Fire.

The western part of the blaze saw moderate overnight activity Saturday as fuel moisture levels remained historically low. Shade provided by smoke from the state's fires set the stage for reduced fire intensity and increased potential for firefighters to make progress building containment lines.

Gov. Gavin Newsom toured what was once Greenville on Saturday and tweeted, "Our hearts ache for this town."

To the east, smoke significantly reduced visibility, making driving hazardous for weekend firefighting crews. Clearing skies near Moonlight Peak in Plumas County led to more dynamic fire behavior.

Crews worked along the fire's edge, cutting hand lines and using fire engines to contain the fire, said Serena Baker, Dixie Fire East Zone public information officer. The lifting of smoke later Sunday and expected winds were likely to make it more dangerous for crews to be near the edge of the fire.

"Today unfortunately is kind of the return of a drying trend in the forecast," along with warmer temperatures and gusty southwest winds, Baker said Sunday.

But that better visibility also allows for airplanes and helicopters to attack the blaze from the air, she said.

Fire managers were shifting personnel to cover priority areas, including protecting homes in Crescent Mills and Hunt Canyon (Plumas County) and Westwood (Lassen County).

Baker said crews had already cut fire lines near Highway 147 on the eastern side of Lake Almanor and moving toward Westwood. In Crescent Mills, south of Greenville, fire crews were burning off fuels that could feed the blaze, laying water hoses in some neighborhoods, and staging sprinklers and water pumps for the potential of fire threatening structures there, she said.

Mandatory evacuations were in place south of Highway 44, including in Silver Lake, Juniper Lake and the Caribou Wilderness Area Zone. Officials urged everyone to immediately leave the unpopulated area

south of Mountain Meadows Reservoir from Hamilton Branch waterway east to the Lassen-Plumas County line.

The Red Cross announced Sunday it was opening a shelter for evacuees at Shasta College in Redding. In Lassen County, shelters at Lassen High School and Lassen Community College are available, and in Plumas County, Springs of Hope Christian Fellowship, Portola Station Baptist Church and Holy Family Church are all open to evacuees. Campsites are also available for those fleeing the fire in Lassen National Forest, including Eagle Lake and Hat Creek.

Firefighters continued to make progress against the River Fire near Colfax (Placer County), which threatened a number of residential areas. At 2,600 acres, the blaze was 65% contained early Sunday after firefighters expanded containment lines, officials said. Inspection teams were evaluating damage.

The River Fire had destroyed 88 structures and damaged 20 by Sunday evening. Three people, including civilians and fire personnel, have been injured.

## **Multiple California wildfires prompt District to issue Health Caution**

Hanford Sentinel, Friday, Aug. 6, 2021

A changing weather pattern and multiple wildfires burning in Northern California, and other fires burning in Tuolumne and Mariposa counties, have prompted local air officials to issue a health caution for potential smoke impacts for the entire San Joaquin Valley. The health caution will remain in place until the fires are extinguished, or until smoke is no longer affecting the Valley. The District warns residents being impacted by smoke to stay indoors to reduce their exposure to particulate matter (PM) emissions.

Particulate matter can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis, and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. Individuals with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of PM exposure. Those with existing respiratory conditions, including COVID-19, young children and the elderly, are especially susceptible to the health effects from this form of pollution. Anyone experiencing poor air quality due to wildfire smoke should move to a filtered, air-conditioned environment with windows closed. Common cloth and paper masks being used as protection from COVID-19 may not be sufficient protection from wildfire smoke inhalation.

The public is advised to visit the District's Wildfire Information Page at [www.valleyair.org/wildfires](http://www.valleyair.org/wildfires) for details on current and recently past wildfires affecting the Valley. The site includes resources on how to protect yourself from exposure to wildfire smoke, including instructions on how to make a DIY air filter for your home, links to foothill air monitors and the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN), allowing residents to track air quality at any Valley location. You can visit RAAN directly at [myRAAN.com](http://myRAAN.com) or use the "Valley Air" app, free to download on any mobile device. In addition, see the EPA's recommendations on "What Can I Do Now to Protect My Family from Wildfire Smoke?"

For more information, visit [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org) or call a District office in Fresno (559-230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-392-5500).

## **Multiple wildfires prompt Air District to issue health caution**

Turlock Journal, Friday, Aug. 6, 2021

A changing weather pattern and multiple wildfires burning in Northern California, and other fires burning in Tuolumne and Mariposa counties, have prompted local air officials to issue a health caution for potential smoke impacts for the entire San Joaquin Valley.

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For more information, visit [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org) or call the District office at 209-557-6400.

## **Wildfires prompt officials to issue health caution**

The Bakersfield Californian, Friday, Aug 6, 2021

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has issued a health caution for potential smoke impacts for the entire San Joaquin Valley due to multiple fires burning in Northern California and Tuolumne County.

The SJVAPCD warns residents impacted by smoke to stay indoors. Particulate matter from the smoke can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate acute bronchitis and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. Those with existing respiratory conditions, including COVID 19, young children and the elderly are especially susceptible to health effects from this sort of pollution.

For further information, visit [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org) or call the district office at 661-392-5500.

## **Fresno's FAX system to roll out electric buses**

By Frank Lopez

The Business Journal, Friday, August 6, 2021

Mayor Jerry Dyer held a press conference Thursday morning to announce that the city's FAX bus system will be deploying its first electric vehicles.

City officials expect to launch two electric buses — each with an average \$1.3 million price tag — on the streets of Fresno by Nov. 1.

Seven additional electric buses have been ordered for the FAX fleet and are slated to arrive in mid 2022.

Funding comes from various Federal Transit Administration grants as well as the state.

The buses will first be rolled out for passengers who take Route 38, which runs from River Park south down Cedar Avenue to Jensen Avenue then to West Fresno and downtown.

"Today we are demonstrating as a city that cleaning up our city—unifying our city, is more than just picking up litter and trash, it is also about cleaning up our air quality in Fresno," Dyer said. "These buses are 100% electric and also have zero tail pipe emissions, so they are 100% energy friendly."

Each bus can transport 35 passengers at one time. Dyer touted that the riders of the electric buses will get "the quietest ride that they will ever have."

One electric takes about four hours to fully charge, providing a bus about a 180-to-195-mile range of travel per charge during summer months and possibly more during colder seasons.

City bus drivers will be trained over the next several months to properly operate the electric buses and perform new safety measures.

To support the FAX's transition to an electric and hybrid fleet, the local infrastructure of charging stations will also be expanded.

The City of Fresno has a goal to fully transition the FAX bus fleet to be 100% electric or hydrogen fuel cell-powered.

“We will be fully transitioned to zero-emission with our bus fleet by 2040,” Dyer said.

The 20-year cost to gradually transition the bus fleet is estimated to be \$264 million.

The completed fleet will consist of 67 battery electric buses, 66 hydrogen fuel cell electric buses, and 65 smaller, paratransit electric buses.

The fully electric buses will be used for less demanding routes while the fuel cell buses will be deployed to longer routes.

Brian Barr, assistant director of transportation for the City of Fresno, said that the Fresno City Council awarded a \$5.7 million contract for a first phase of infrastructure improvements to provide 46 chargers at the FAX bus yard and 30 chargers for light equipment sedans used for FAX operations.

Through PG&E’s EV Fleet program, the utility will upgrade the city’s infrastructure at no cost and will provide incentives for the purchase of bus chargers and electric buses.

Later infrastructure improvements include a hydrogen fuel station at the Fresno Municipal Service Center to support the hydrogen fuel fleet.

Fresno City College has partnered with FAX and secured a grant to develop an advanced propulsion laboratory that will be a state-of-the-art facility at its west satellite campus to develop zero emission technology. The college has also partnered with the bus manufacturer working with the city.

“This is just the beginning as we move forward to zero-emission technology and transition the balance of the municipal fleet. We are ready to meet the challenges ahead,” Barr said.

## **Wildfire explodes to third-largest in California history**

By Daisy Nguyen And Noah Berger Associated Press  
The Business Journal, Friday, August 6, 2021

(AP) — A Northern California wildfire that is now the third-largest in state history had burned for weeks, mostly in remote wildland areas with few people, before it roared through the little mountain community of Greenville, driven by shifting winds and bone-dry vegetation.

Eva Gorman has called the town home for 17 years and said it was love at first sight when she and her husband bought the house where they raised their son.

“We walked up to the front of the house and said ‘Oh wow, this is it,’ she said, a place where her grandmother’s dining room chairs and her aunt’s bed from Italy fit just right. “You know when you run across something that fits like an old shoe or glove?”

Now the town is in ashes after hot, dry, gusty weather drove the fire through the Gold Rush-era Sierra Nevada community of about 1,000. The blaze incinerated much of the downtown that included wooden buildings more than a century old.

The winds were expected to calm and change direction heading into the weekend but that good news came too late for Gorman. She was told that her home burned down — but is waiting until she can see it with her own eyes to believe it’s gone.

Before fleeing Greenville, Gorman said she managed to grab some photos off the wall, her favorite jewelry and important documents. She is coming to terms with the reality that much of what was left behind may be irreplaceable.

“There is a photo I keep visualizing in my mind of my son when he was 2, he’s 37,” she said. “And you think ‘It’s OK, I have the negatives. And then you think. ‘Oh. No. I don’t have the negatives.’”

The Dixie Fire, named for the road where it started, was still raging on Friday after growing overnight by 110 square miles (285 square kilometers), greater than the size of New York City.

“This is going to be a long firefight,” Capt. Mitch Matlow, spokesperson of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, said.

The fire remained at 35% contained Friday morning and now spans an area of 676 square miles (1,751 square kilometers). No injuries or deaths have been reported but the fire continued to threaten more than 10,000 homes.

Officials have not yet assessed the number of destroyed buildings, but Plumas County Sheriff Todd Johns estimated on Thursday that “well over” 100 homes burned in and near the town.

“My heart is crushed by what has occurred there,” said Johns, a lifelong Greenville resident.

About a two-hour drive south, officials said some 100 homes and other buildings burned in the fast-moving River Fire that broke out Wednesday near Colfax, a town of about 2,000. There was no containment and about 6,000 people were ordered to evacuate in Placer and Nevada counties, state fire officials said.

The three-week-old Dixie Fire was one of 100 active, large fires burning in 14 states, most in the West where historic drought has left lands parched and ripe for ignition.

The fire’s cause was under investigation, but the Pacific Gas & Electric utility has said it may have been sparked when a tree fell on one of the utility’s power lines.

On Thursday, the weather and towering smoke clouds produced by the fire’s intense, erratic winds kept firefighters struggling to put firefighters at shifting hot spots.

“We’re seeing truly frightening fire behavior,” said Chris Carlton, supervisor for Plumas National Forest. “We really are in uncharted territory.”

Heat waves and historic drought tied to climate change have made wildfires harder to fight in the American West. Scientists say climate change has made the region much warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

The blaze hit Greenville from two angles and firefighters already were in the town trying to save it but first they had to risk their lives to save people who had refused to evacuate by loading people into cars to get them out, fire officials said.

“We have firefighters that are getting guns pulled out on them, because people don’t want to evacuate,” said Jake Cagle, an incident management operations section chief.

The flames also reached the town of Chester, northwest of Greenville, but crews managed to protect homes and businesses there, with only minor damage to one or two buildings, officials said.

The fire was not far from the town of Paradise, which was largely destroyed in a 2018 wildfire sparked by PG&E equipment that killed 85 people, making it the nation’s deadliest U.S. wildfire in at least a century.

Gorman said she asks herself how another California town could be reduced to ashes.

“That’s what I keep thinking. It’s happening, again,” said Gorman. “It’s unfathomable.”