

Excessive Heat and bad air quality dominate today's forecast **We're very hot and hazy for another day**

By Elaina Rusk

23ABC, Monday, Aug. 16, 2021

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. — A stubborn ridge of high pressure remains anchored overhead, sending us into the hottest temperatures we've had so far this month... it's not the hottest of the Summer, but it'll be scorching as the valley and desert cities have Excessive Heat Warnings in effect due to afternoon highs of 105 to 112 degrees!

Bakersfield is facing a forecast high of 107 this afternoon, close to our daily record high of 109 set back in 1920. Ridgecrest is the hot spot with a forecast of 112 degrees. Even the mountains can't escape the heat, with a mostly sunny and slightly humid forecast in the 100s for the Kern River Valley as they see showers and the chance for pop up thunderstorms along the Sierra Crest to their north. And of course that leads to more hot mid-90s in the south mountains of Tehachapi and Frazier Park today too.

The bad air quality continues as well, with plenty of trapped smog and wildfire smoke countywide. So the valley air quality forecast remains unhealthy for sensitive groups for another day.

But we'll see a trough of low pressure tracking over the Pacific Northwest tomorrow, pushing this ridge of high pressure out of the way and picking up an onshore flow. Those westerly winds will work to cool us down several degrees tomorrow and push out a lot of this trapped smog and smoke. So as air quality improves, so do temperatures, with a fall to 100 degrees in Bakersfield tomorrow and then a drop below average (which is 97 for this time of year) to a forecast high of 93 degrees on Wednesday, just in time for the first day of school!

In fact, that southwesterly flow looks to continue for the rest of the work week into this weekend, keeping us just below average through Sunday. So it will be sunny and seasonally hot, but we look to get a long break from the 100s at last, which have been mostly in control since Memorial Day. In fact, we've now had 56 days of 100s this season, getting close to doubling our seasonal average of 36 days.

As for those 100s, the long range forecast brings them back in with a building ridge of high pressure next Tuesday.

California fire threatens homes as blazes burn across West

By Eugene Garcia and Christopher Weber Associated Press

Bakersfield Californian and San Francisco Chronicle, Monday, Aug. 16, 2021

QUINCY, Calif. (AP) — Thousands of homes in Northern California remain threatened by the nation's largest wildfire as unstable weather creates a high danger of new blazes erupting across the West.

Weekend thunderstorms across the northern Sierra didn't produce much rain, instead whipping up winds and unleashing lightning strikes that that bedeviled the more than 6,000 firefighters trying to contain the month-old Dixie Fire amid temperatures forecast to top 100 degrees (38 Celsius).

"We're definitely still dealing with the possibility of lightning. Winds are all over the place. Things are going to be pretty unstable for the next couple days," said fire spokesman Edwin Zuniga.

Gusts of up to 50 mph (80 kph) on Saturday pushed flames closer to Janesville, a town of about 1,500 people just east of Greenville, the small gold rush-era community decimated by the fire 10 days ago.

James Reichle evacuated from Greenville and has been sleeping with his dog in a trailer outside a church. His home survived the flames but he's been unable to return because the roads are closed. He said he feels for his neighbors at the evacuation center who lost everything.

"These are all people who either don't have a home or don't have access to a home. I still have a house standing, no damage. But I can't get into it," he said Saturday.

The Dixie Fire was the largest among more than 100 big blazes burning in more than a dozen states in the West, a region seared by drought and hot, bone-dry weather that turned forests, brushlands, meadows and pastures into tinder.

The U.S. Forest Service said it is operating in crisis mode, fully deploying firefighters and maxing out its support system.

The roughly 21,000 federal firefighters working on the ground is more than double the number of firefighters sent to contain forest fires at this time a year ago, said Anthony Scardina, a deputy forester for the agency's Pacific Southwest region.

The Dixie fire has ravaged nearly 867 square miles (2,246 square kilometers) — an area the size of Tokyo, or more than twice the size of Indianapolis. It was 31% contained on Sunday.

Near Taylorsville, California, some firefighters on Sunday were monitoring a bear cub who was possibly orphaned in the fire. The emaciated cub was awaiting extraction from the burn-scarred area by a wildlife rescue team.

“Generally if you see them with a sow or a mother bear, they’ll stay with the mother bear and run off,” said firefighter Johnnie Macy, who was deployed from Golden, Colorado to battle the Dixie Fire. “This bear hasn’t done that, so because of that we think that the bear’s orphaned as a result of the fire.”

More than 1,000 homes and businesses have been destroyed and nearly 15,000 structures were still under threat from the Dixie fire, whose cause has not been determined. Pacific Gas and Electric has said it may have been sparked when a tree fell on its power line.

A few hundred miles to the south, evacuations were ordered Sunday after a blaze that broke out the night before churned through California forestland near the remote community of Omo Ranch. There was no containment of the Caldor Fire burning in El Dorado County, about 60 miles (73 kilometers) east of Sacramento.

Meanwhile, a small wildfire that blew up Saturday east of Salt Lake City, temporarily shutting down Interstate 80 and leading to evacuation orders for some 8,000 residences, was caused by a vehicle with a malfunctioning catalytic converter, Utah Fire Info said. The Parleys Canyon Fire then calmed significantly, and homes were no longer threatened, officials said Sunday.

In southeastern Montana, firefighters gained ground on a pair of blazes that chewed through vast rangelands and at one point threatened the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation. Those fires were caused by heat from coal seams, the deposits of coal found in the ground in the area, said Peggy Miller, a spokeswoman for the fires.

Mandatory evacuations for the tribal headquarters town of Lame Deer were lifted Sunday, but remained in place for those with medical conditions, and heavy smoke made air quality unhealthy across much of Montana, according to the state Department of Environmental Quality.

Smoke also drove air pollution levels to unhealthy or very unhealthy levels in parts of Northern California, Oregon and Idaho.

Climate change has made the U.S. West warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make the weather more extreme and wildfires more destructive, according to scientists.

Thunderstorms push Northern California wildfires closer to two towns

By Eugene Garcia and Daisy Nguyen Associated Press
Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, Aug. 15, 2021

- Dixie Fire: See incident reports [from Cal Fire's website](#).
- Maps: View maps from the [U.S. Forest Service](#).
- Evacuations: Find the latest information from [Cal Fire](#).
- Dixie Fire information line: (530) 538-7826.

The danger of new fires erupting across the West because of unstable weather conditions added to the burden already faced by overstretched crews battling blazes across the region.

Thunderstorms pushed flames in Northern California on Saturday closer to two towns not far from where the Dixie Fire last week destroyed much of the small town of Greenville, a gold rush-era community.

The thunderstorms, which began Friday, didn't produce much rain but whipped up wind and created lightning strikes, forcing crews to focus on using bulldozers to build lines and keep the blaze from reaching Westwood, a town of about 1,700 people. Westwood was placed under evacuation orders Aug. 5.

Wind gusts of up to 50 mph (80 kph) also pushed the fire closer to Janesville, a town of about 1,500 people, east of Greenville, said Jake Cagle, the operations chief at the east zone of the fire.

"Very tough day in there yesterday in the afternoon and the night (crew) picked up the pieces and tried to secure the edge the best they could with the resources they had," he said in a briefing Saturday.

The fire was among more than 100 large wildfires burning in more than a dozen states in the West, a region seared by drought and hot, bone-dry weather that turned forests, brushlands, meadows and pastures into tinder.

The U.S. Forest Service said Friday it is operating in crisis mode, fully deploying firefighters and maxing out its support system.

The roughly 21,000 federal firefighters working on the ground is more than double the number of firefighters sent to contain forest fires at this time a year ago, said Anthony Scardina, a deputy forester for the agency's Pacific Southwest region.

More than 6,000 firefighters alone were battling the Dixie Fire, which has ravaged nearly 845 square miles (2,100 square kilometers) — an area the size of Tokyo — and was 31% contained.

"The size is unimaginable, its duration and its impact on these people, all of us, including me, is unbelievable," said Johnnie Brookwood, who was staying in her third evacuation center.

Brookwood had never heard of a road named Dixie when the wildfire began a month ago in the forestlands of Northern California.

Within three weeks, it exploded into the largest wildfire burning in the U.S., destroying more than 1,000 homes and businesses including a lodge in Greenville where she was renting a room for \$650 per month.

"At first (the fire) didn't affect us at all, it was off in some place called Dixie, I didn't even know what it means," Brookwood, 76, said Saturday. "Then it was 'Oh no we have to go too?' Surely Greenville won't burn. But then it did — and now all we can see are ashes."

The cause of the fire has not been determined. Pacific Gas and Electric has said the fire may have been started when a tree fell on its power line.

Smoke also drove air pollution levels to unhealthy or very unhealthy levels in parts of Northern California, Oregon and Idaho.

In southeastern Oregon, two wildfires started by lightning Thursday near the California border spread rapidly through juniper trees, sagebrush and evergreen trees.

The Patton Meadow Fire about 14 miles (23 kilometers) west of Lakeview, near the California border, exploded to 11 square miles (28 square kilometers) in less than 24 hours in a landscape sucked dry by extreme drought. It was 10% contained.

Crews battle largest US wildfire, threats grow across West

By Eugene Garcia and Daisy Nguyen Associated Press
Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021

QUINCY, Calif. (AP) — Johnnie Brookwood had never heard of a road named Dixie when a wildfire began a month ago in the forestlands of Northern California.

Within three weeks, it exploded into the largest wildfire burning in the U.S., destroying more than 1,000 homes and businesses including a lodge in the gold rush-era town of Greenville where she was renting a room for \$650 per month.

"At first (the fire) didn't affect us at all, it was off in some place called Dixie, I didn't even know what it means," Brookwood, 76, said Saturday. "Then it was 'Oh no we have to go too?' Surely Greenville won't burn, but then it did and now all we can see are ashes."

Firefighters faced "another critical day" as thunderstorms pushed flames closer to two towns not far from where the Dixie Fire destroyed much of Greenville last week.

The thunderstorms, which began Friday, didn't produce much rain but whipped up wind and created lightning strikes, forcing crews to focus on using bulldozers to build lines and keep the blaze from reaching Westwood, a town of about 1,700 people. Westwood was placed under evacuation orders Aug. 5.

Wind gusts of up to 50 mph (80 kph) also pushed the fire closer to Janesville, a town of about 1,500 people, east of Greenville, said Jake Cagle, the operations chief at the east zone of the fire.

"Very tough day in there yesterday in the afternoon and the night (crew) picked up the pieces and tried to secure the edge the best they could with the resources they had," he said in a briefing Saturday.

With a similar forecast of thunderstorms Saturday, firefighters faced "another critical day, another challenging day," Cagle said.

The fire was among more than 100 large wildfires burning in more than a dozen states in the West seared by drought and hot, bone-dry weather that turned forests, brushlands, meadows and pastures into tinder.

The U.S. Forest Service said Friday it's operating in crisis mode, fully deploying firefighters and maxing out its support system.

The roughly 21,000 federal firefighters working on the ground is more than double the number of firefighters sent to contain forest fires at this time a year ago, said Anthony Scardina, a deputy forester for the agency's Pacific Southwest region.

More than 6,000 firefighters alone were battling the Dixie Fire, which has ravaged nearly 845 square miles (2,100 square kilometers) — an area the size of Tokyo — and was 31% contained.

"The size is unimaginable, its duration and its impact on these people, all of us, including me, is unbelievable," Brookwood said while staying in her third evacuation center.

The cause of the fire has not been determined. Pacific Gas and Electric has said the fire may have been started when a tree fell on its power line.

There also was a danger of new fires erupting because of unstable weather conditions, including extreme heat across the northern half of the West and a chance of thunderstorms that could bring lightning to Northern California, Oregon and Nevada, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

A fast-moving fire broke out Saturday afternoon east of Salt Lake City, shutting down Interstate 80 and prompting the evacuation of Summit Park, a mountain community of 6,600 people. Fire officials said the blaze was burning about 3 square miles (8 square kilometers) and threatening thousands of homes and power lines.

In southeastern Montana, firefighters were gaining ground on a pair of fires that chewed through vast rangelands and at one point threatened the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation.

The fires were caused by heat from coal seams, the deposits of coal found in the ground in the area, said Peggy Miller, a spokeswoman for the fires.

Mandatory evacuation for the tribal headquarters town of Lame Deer remained in place due to poor air quality, she added.

Smoke also drove air pollution levels to unhealthy or very unhealthy levels in parts of Northern California, Oregon and Idaho, according to the U.S. Air Quality Index.

Hot, dry weather with strong afternoon winds also propelled several fires in Washington state, and similar weather was expected into the weekend, fire officials said.

In southeastern Oregon, two new wildfires started by lightning Thursday near the California border spread rapidly through juniper trees, sagebrush and evergreen trees.

The Patton Meadow Fire about 14 miles (23 kilometers) west of Lakeview, near the California border, exploded to 11 square miles (28 square kilometers) in less than 24 hours in a landscape sucked dry by extreme drought. It was 10% contained.

Triple-digit temperatures and bone-dry conditions in Oregon could increase fire risks through the weekend.

Climate change has made the U.S. West warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make the weather more extreme and wildfires more destructive, according to scientists.

Dozens of fires also are burning in western Canada and in Europe, including Greece, where a massive wildfire has decimated forests and torched homes.

This story was corrected to show the Dixie Fire was likely caused by a tree falling onto a power line, according to PG&E, not by lightning.

Triple-digit temps and gusting winds could accelerate Dixie Fire growth

By [Dominic Fracassa](#)

San Francisco Chronicle, Monday, Aug. 16, 2021

A menacing mix of hot temperatures, low humidity and gusting winds is expected to descend across [a swath of Northern California](#) on Monday with the potential to accelerate the growth of [the Dixie Fire](#), already the second-largest wildfire in California history.

The Dixie Fire was reported at just under 570,000 acres Monday morning, slightly smaller than Cal Fire had estimated a day earlier. The blaze remained 31% contained, a number unchanged since late last week.

A heavy layer of smoke helped dampen the fire's growth overnight, Cal Fire said, but those conditions are not expected to last.

The fire has destroyed at least 625 single-family homes, eight multi-family homes and hundreds of other structures.

Temperatures where the fire is already burning across Plumas, Tehama, Lassen and Butte counties are expected to reach triple digits Monday, and wind gusts could reach as high as 30 mph.

In response to the forecast, Pacific Gas & Electric Co. said Sunday that [it was considering preemptive power shut-offs](#) starting Tuesday night for about 39,000 customers, mostly in Butte and Shasta counties. Some customers in Sonoma, Napa and Solano counties could also lose power if PG&E moves forward with the shut-offs.

PG&E's equipment has been linked to some of the [most destructive wildfires](#) in California history, and it instituted the shut-offs in 2018 to try to lower that risk.

The utility lists planned outages on its [PSPS Events webpage](#) and says it notifies customers at 48 hours, 24 hours and just before shutting off power through automated calls, texts and emails. You can [update your contact information with PG&E online](#) or call 866-743-6589.

The Chronicle maintains an interactive [PG&E power outage map](#) with [an FAQ](#) about how to navigate power shut-offs.