



Ventura County  
Air Pollution  
Control District

669 County Square Drive  
Ventura, California 93003

tel 805/645-1400  
fax 805/645-1444  
www.vcapcd.org

**Michael Villegas**  
Air Pollution Control Officer

March 9, 2009

Karen Magliano  
Chief, Air Quality Data Branch  
California Air Resources Board  
P.O. 2815  
Sacramento, CA 95812

**Subject: Request to Exclude PM Data Impacted by  
2007 Southern California Wildfires**

Dear Ms. Magliano:

This correspondence is in response to Theresa Najita's March 2 email to me regarding PM data impacted by the 2007 Southern California wildfires. The Ventura County Air Pollution Control District is requesting that data showing exceedances of the federal PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> air quality standards during the Southern California wildfires of October 2007 be excluded due to an exceptional event. As shown in the attached Table, we are requesting that the October 21, 2007, PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> data from our El Rio monitoring site be excluded. I am enclosing a report prepared by my staff and previously submitted to ARB; the information in this report contains the supporting information you are seeking to justify our request.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact me at 805/645-1440 or Keith Duval of my staff at 805/645-1410.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Villegas".

Michael Villegas

Air Pollution Control Officer

c: Keith Duval, VCAPCD  
Herm Ragsdale, VCAPCD

Exceptional Event Data  
PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> FRM Monitors  
24 hour average, micrograms per cubic meter

Monitoring Site		Pollutant	Date
			21-Oct-2007
El Rio	Site ID: 61113001 POC 1 Monitor Type: FRM	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	39.9
El Rio	Site ID: 61113001 POC 1 Monitor Type: FRM	PM <sub>10</sub>	246

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FIRES  
OCTOBER 20 - 29, 2007

JUSTIFICATION FOR  
EXCEPTIONAL EVENT STATUS  
FOR PM<sub>2.5</sub> AND PM<sub>10</sub>

Submitted: November 28, 2008

Revised: March 9, 2008



Ventura County Air Pollution Control District

669 County Square Drive  
Ventura, CA 93003

## INTRODUCTION

On October 20, 2007 through October 29, 2007, Ventura County's air quality was severely impacted by fires that burned in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. This report has been prepared to justify that the PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> data monitored during the Southern California wildfires of October 2007 be excluded due to an exceptional event.

The federal air quality standard for PM<sub>2.5</sub> is 35 micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )<sup>1</sup>, averaged over 24 hours. On Sunday, October 21 Ventura County's El Rio monitoring site recorded an exceedance of the federal 24-hour standard for PM<sub>2.5</sub> with a value of 39.9  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ . During this period, no other exceedances of the federal 24-hour standard for PM<sub>2.5</sub> were recorded. However, on October 21 and October 27 the El Rio, Piru, Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks monitoring sites recorded 24-hour averages for PM<sub>2.5</sub> exceeding 24 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ . Table 1 shows the 24-hour averages for PM<sub>2.5</sub> on October 21 and 27.

Table 1  
PM<sub>2.5</sub> FRM Monitors  
24-hour average, micrograms per cubic meter

Monitoring Site		Pollutant	Dates	
			21-Oct-2007	27-Oct-2007
El Rio	Site ID: 061113001 POC 1 Monitor Type: FRM	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	39.9	27.5
Piru	Site ID: 061110009 POC 1 Monitor Type: FRM	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PF	34.3
Simi Valley	Site ID: 061112002 POC 1 Monitor Type: FRM	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	29.1	21.2
Thousand Oaks	Site ID: 061110007 POC 1 Monitor Type: FRM	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PF	24.9
Thousand Oaks	Site ID: 061110007 POC 2 Monitor Type: FRM	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PF	26

PF = power failure for 1 hour or more during the 24-hour sample, therefore data is excluded.

<sup>1</sup> The 24-hour PM<sub>2.5</sub> standard is based upon a 3-year average of the 98th percentile of 24-hour concentrations at each monitor

The 24-hour federal air quality standard for PM<sub>10</sub> is 150 µg/m<sup>3</sup><sup>2</sup>, averaged over 24 hours. On Sunday, October 21 Ventura County's El Rio monitoring site recorded an exceedance of the federal 24-hour standard for PM<sub>10</sub> with a value of 246 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. During this period, no other exceedances of the federal 24-hour standard for PM<sub>10</sub> were recorded. However, on October 21 the Simi Valley monitoring site recorded 24-hour PM<sub>10</sub> values of 119 and 116 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. Table 2 shows the 24-hour PM<sub>10</sub> values for October 21.

Table 2  
PM<sub>10</sub> FRM Monitors  
24-hour average, micrograms per cubic meter

Monitoring Site		Pollutant	Date
			21-Oct-2007
El Rio	Site ID: 061113001 POC 1 Monitor Type: FRM	PM <sub>10</sub>	246
Simi Valley	Site ID: 061112002 POC 1 Monitor Type: FRM	PM <sub>10</sub>	119
Simi Valley	Site ID: 061112002 POC 2 Monitor Type: FRM	PM <sub>10</sub>	116

Pursuant to Code of Federal Regulations, Title 40, Section 50.14, the state may request the Environmental Protection Agency to exclude data showing exceedances or violations of the national ambient air quality standard that are directly due to an exceptional event from use in determinations by demonstrating to EPA's satisfaction that such event caused a specific air pollution concentration at a particulate air quality monitoring location.

The purpose of this document is to document that the Southern California fires during the period of October 20, 2007 through October 29, 2007, were the cause of Ventura County's exceedance of the federal PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> air quality standards.

---

<sup>2</sup> The 24-hour PM<sub>10</sub> standard is not to be exceeded more than once per year on average over 3 years.

## **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FIRE LOCATIONS**

Beginning on October 20, 2007, fires began in Ventura, Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties that severely impacted Ventura County's air quality. Attachment 1 is a map showing the locations of the various Southern California fires. Attachment 2 includes a collection of newspaper articles from the Ventura County Star regarding the fires in the region.

### **Ranch Fire**

On the evening of Saturday, October 20 the Ranch fire began north of Piru in Los Angeles County and headed towards Piru and Fillmore in Ventura County. The fire burned over 55,800 acres – mostly in Ventura County - and was contained by Friday, October 26.

### **Nightsky Fire**

In Ventura County, on the morning of Sunday, October 21 the Nightsky fire began in the Santa Rosa Valley (Camarillo). The fire burned approximately 35 acres and was contained on Monday, October 22.

### **Magic Fire**

On Monday, October 22 the Magic fire began in Valencia, Los Angeles County, just east of the Ventura County line. The fire moved easterly towards Ventura County. The fire burned approximately 2,800 acres and was contained by Wednesday, October 24.

### **Malibu "Canyon" Fire**

The Malibu "Canyon" fire began on Sunday morning, October 21 in Malibu, Los Angeles County, several miles southeast of Ventura County. The fire burned approximately 4,500 acres and stayed within the Malibu area; the fire was contained by Wednesday, October 24.

### **Buckweed Fire**

The Buckweed fire began on Sunday, October 21 in Agua Dulce, in northeastern Los Angeles County, east of Ventura County. The fire burned approximately 40,000 acres; 32 homes were destroyed. The fire was contained Wednesday, October 24.

### **Other Fires**

In addition to the fires listed above which were in close proximity to Ventura County, several other fires burned in areas east of Ventura County. Those fires were the Slide Fire in the Green Valley Lake area of the San Bernardino Mountains and the Grass Valley Fire in Grass Valley northwest of Lake Arrowhead in the San Bernardino Mountains.

## **WEATHER CONDITIONS DURING THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FIRES**

During the period of the Southern California fires, the region's predominant winds were strong winds from the east. There were multiple days where measured winds averaged 20 to 40 mph with gusts to 60 mph. As a result of these continuous easterly winds, Ventura County was severely impacted by smoke from the fires. Attachment 2 contains satellite images from Sunday, October 21 through Friday, October 26.

## **VENTURA COUNTY APCD'S PARTICULATE MONITORING NETWORK**

The Ventura County APCD monitors particulate matter (PM) at the locations within Ventura County shown in Table 3. The location of the District's monitoring sites is shown in Figure 1.

During the Southern California fires of October 21 through 29, 2007, the Ventura County APCD continuously monitored PM<sub>2.5</sub> using its Beta Attenuation Monitors (BAMs). The District's PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> federal reference method (FRM) monitors are operated on a national schedule set by EPA. The District's PM<sub>2.5</sub> FRM monitors are operated on either a 1 day in 6 day schedule or a 1 day in 3 day schedule. The District's PM<sub>10</sub> FRM monitors are operated on a 1 day in 6 day schedule. The national schedule called for the PM<sub>2.5</sub> FRM monitors at the El Rio and Simi Valley monitoring sites to operate on October 21, 24 and 27 (a 1 in 3 day schedule). The Ojai, Piru and Thousand Oaks PM<sub>2.5</sub> FRM monitors were required by EPA's national schedule to operate on October 21 and 27 (a 1 in 6 day schedule). The national schedule called for the District's PM<sub>10</sub> FRM monitors at El Rio, Simi Valley and Ojai to operate on October 21 and 27.

Table 3  
Ventura County APCD Air Monitoring Stations

<b>Site Name</b>	<b>AQS ID</b>	<b>Pollutants Monitored</b>	<b>Sampling Frequency</b>
El Rio – Rio Mesa School #2	0061113001	BAM PM <sub>2.5</sub>	Continuous
		PM <sub>10</sub>	1 in 6 days
		FRM PM <sub>2.5</sub>	1 in 3 days
Ojai – Ojai Avenue	0061111004	BAM PM <sub>2.5</sub>	Continuous
		PM <sub>10</sub>	1 in 6 days
Piru – Pacific Avenue	0061110009	BAM PM <sub>2.5</sub>	Continuous
		FRM PM <sub>2.5</sub>	1 in 6 days
Simi Valley – Cochran Street	0061112002	BAM PM <sub>2.5</sub>	Continuous
		PM <sub>10</sub>	1 in 6 days
		PM <sub>10</sub> (Collocated)	1 in 6 days
		FRM PM <sub>2.5</sub>	1 in 3 days
Thousand Oaks – Moorpark Road	0061110007	BAM PM <sub>2.5</sub>	Continuous
		FRM PM <sub>2.5</sub>	1 in 6 days
		FRM PM <sub>2.5</sub> (Collocated)	1 in 6 days

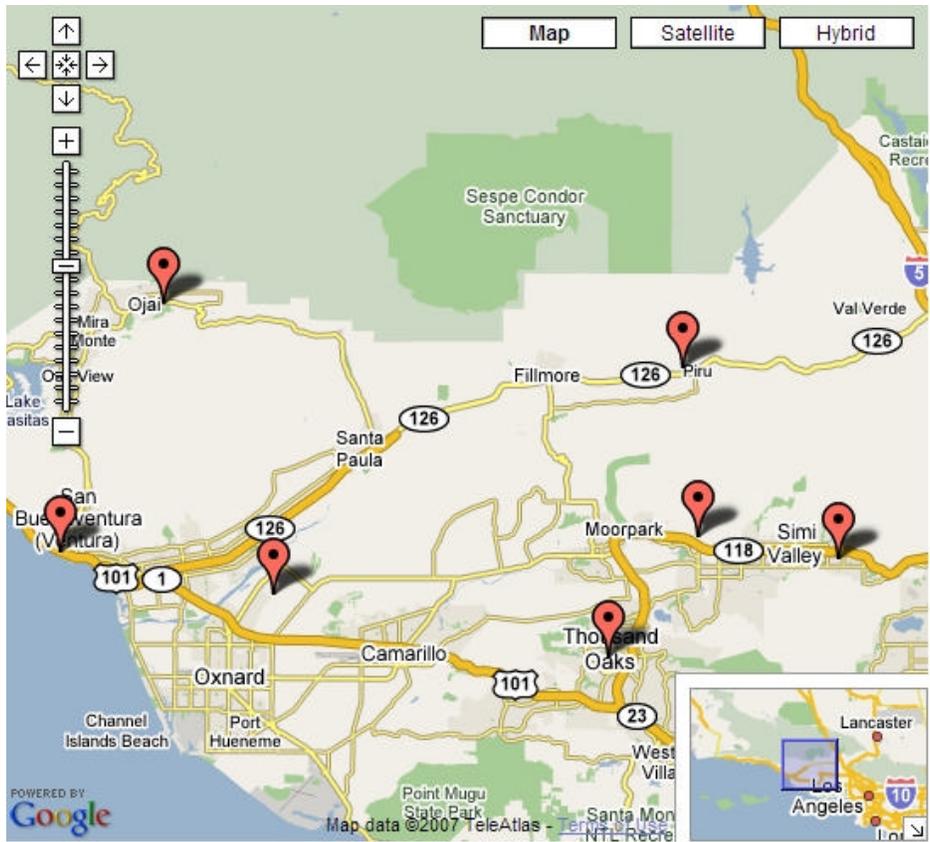


Figure 1  
Map of Ventura County APCD Air Monitoring Stations

## AIR QUALITY IN VENTURA COUNTY

During the period of the Southern California fires, the Ventura County APCD continued to operate its network of air monitoring stations. Readings taken from the APCD's five BAMs for the period of October 20 through 29, 2007 are shown in Table 4. The BAM readings show the impact of the fire on Ventura County's air quality beginning on October 21 with peak readings at the Piru monitoring site on Tuesday, October 22 at 108  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ . During the initial period Ventura County experienced high temperatures and high sustained winds from the east. Both of these factors resulted in a number of power failures at the Piru, Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks monitoring stations.

Table 4  
 PM<sub>2.5</sub> BAM Readings  
 24-hour average, micrograms per cubic meter

	20-Oct-07	21-Oct-07	22-Oct-07	23-Oct-07	24-Oct-07
El Rio	9	75	50	50	15
Ojai	18	69	47	25	11
Piru	4	34 PF	108 PF	31 PF	6
Simi Valley	10	40	15 PF	4 PF	7
Thousand Oaks	15	25 PF	43	7 PF	13

	25-Oct-07	26-Oct-07	27-Oct-07	28-Oct-07	29-Oct-07
El Rio	13	37 PF	28	14	15
Ojai	13	40	33	8	7
Piru	16	54	29	11	8
Simi Valley	17	54	28	15	9
Thousand Oaks	20	51	32	18	10

PF = power failure for 1 hour or more during the 24-hour sample.

On October 21 and 27 the District operated its PM<sub>2.5</sub> FRMs at the El Rio, Piru, Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks monitoring stations according to EPA's national schedule. The PM<sub>2.5</sub> monitors at the El Rio and Simi Valley monitoring stations were also operated on October 24. PM<sub>2.5</sub> data during these sampling days is shown in Table 5, below.

Table 5  
 PM<sub>2.5</sub> FRM Monitors  
 24-hour average, micrograms per cubic meter

Monitoring Sites	21-Oct-07	24-Oct-07	27-Oct-07
El Rio	39.9	16.2	27.5
Piru	29.1 PF	---	34.3
Simi Valley	29.1	8.5	21.2
Thousand Oaks (POC 1)	27.5 PF	---	24.9
Thousand Oaks (POC 2) - Collocated	28.0 PF	---	26.0

PF = power failure for 1 hour or more during the 24-hour sample; this data can not be reported to EPA's AQS.

The District's PM<sub>10</sub> FRM monitors at the El Rio, Simi Valley and Ojai monitoring sites operate on a 1 day in 6 day schedule and were operated on October 21 and 27. PM<sub>10</sub> data during these sampling days is shown in Table 6, below.

Table 6  
 PM<sub>10</sub> FRM Monitors  
 24-hour average, micrograms per cubic meter

Monitoring Sites	21-Oct-07	27-Oct-07
El Rio	246	46
Simi Valley (POC 1)	119	45
Simi Valley (POC 2) - Collocated	116	43
Ojai	99	54

#### **OTHER EMISSION ACTIVITIES IN VENTURA COUNTY**

During the period of October 20 through 29 there were no known extraneous emission activities occurring in Ventura County. All days during this period were designated as "No Burn" days for agricultural burning.

## PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

Beginning on the afternoon of Sunday, October 21, the APCD posted air quality advisories on its website. Figures 2.a and 2.b are sample of the air quality advisories posted to the District's website. The District's website includes mirrored images from EPA's AirNow website which allows the public to view current PM<sub>2.5</sub> particle maps of the District's five continuous (BAM) PM<sub>2.5</sub> monitors. In addition, the District issued twice-daily air quality forecasts to County schools, media outlets and other interested parties.

orcast Page 1 of



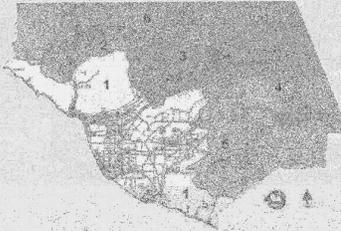
### Ventura County Air Pollution Control District

#### Air Quality Forecast + Agricultural Burn Status

Home Search Forms Contact

### Air Quality Advisory

Due to the smoke from many of the wildfires in and around Ventura County, it is possible that almost all areas of Ventura County will encounter smoke at some time. Air Quality in areas affected by the smoke are considered to be unhealthy. If you smelt smoke, be cautious and use common sense to protect your family's health. Everyone, especially people with heart or lung disease (including asthma), older adults and children should limit time spent outdoors, and limit physical or heavy exertion. If you have symptoms of lung or heart disease that may be related to smoke smoke exposure (including repeated coughing, wheezing or breathes or difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest tightness or pain, rashes or hives, fatigue or dizziness) or if you are pregnant, contact your health care provider. This advisory will be extended as conditions warrant. If you have questions contact VCAPCD, Kent Field or Public Health at 805-662-6760 or 845-1400.



#### Agricultural Burn Regions

1. Coastal (Ventura / Oxnard / Camarillo)
2. Ojai Valley
3. Fillmore and Piru
4. Simi Valley and Moorpark
5. Conejo Valley (Thousand Oaks)
6. Northern Ventura County

Burn Region	1	2	3	4	5	6
Early Morning (7 a.m. - 10 a.m.)	No	No	No	No	No	No
Late Morning (10 a.m. - noon)	No	No	No	No	No	No
Afternoon (noon - 4 p.m.)	No	No	No	No	No	No

Permit Must be Obtained from a Ventura County Fire Station

<http://www.vcapcd.org/forecast.aspx> 10/21-24 10/23/2007

Figure 2.a  
Air Quality Advisory Posted October 23 through Oct 24, 2007



**Ventura County Air Pollution Control District**

**Air Quality Forecast + Agricultural Burn Status**

[Home](#) [Search](#) [Forms](#) [Contact](#)

**Air Quality Advisory**

Due to the smoke from many of the wildfires in and around Ventura County, it is possible that almost all areas of Ventura County will encounter smoke at some time. Air Quality in areas affected by the smoke are considered to be unhealthy. The Santa Ana winds are decreasing and the air quality is getting better. And there will be periods of time where the air quality is "Good." And there will be periods when it will be "Unhealthy". If you smell smoke, be cautious and use common sense to protect your family's health. Everyone, especially people with heart or lung disease (including asthma), older adults and children should limit time spent outdoors, and limit prolonged or heavy exertion. If you or your family is experiencing health problems, contact your health care provider. This advisory will be extended as conditions warrant. If you have questions contact VCAPCD, Kent Field or Mallory Ham at 805-662-6960 or 645-1400.



**Agricultural Burn Regions**

- 1. Coastal (Ventura / Oxnard / Camarillo)
- 2. Ojai Valley
- 3. Fillmore and Piru
- 4. Simi Valley and Moorpark
- 5. Conejo Valley (Thousand Oaks)
- 6. Northern Ventura County

Agricultural Burn Status for Thursday, October 25, 2007

Burn Region	1	2	3	4	5	8 < 3k ft	8 > 3k ft
Early Morning (7 a.m. - 10 a.m.)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Late Morning (10 a.m. - noon)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Afternoon (noon - 4 p.m.)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

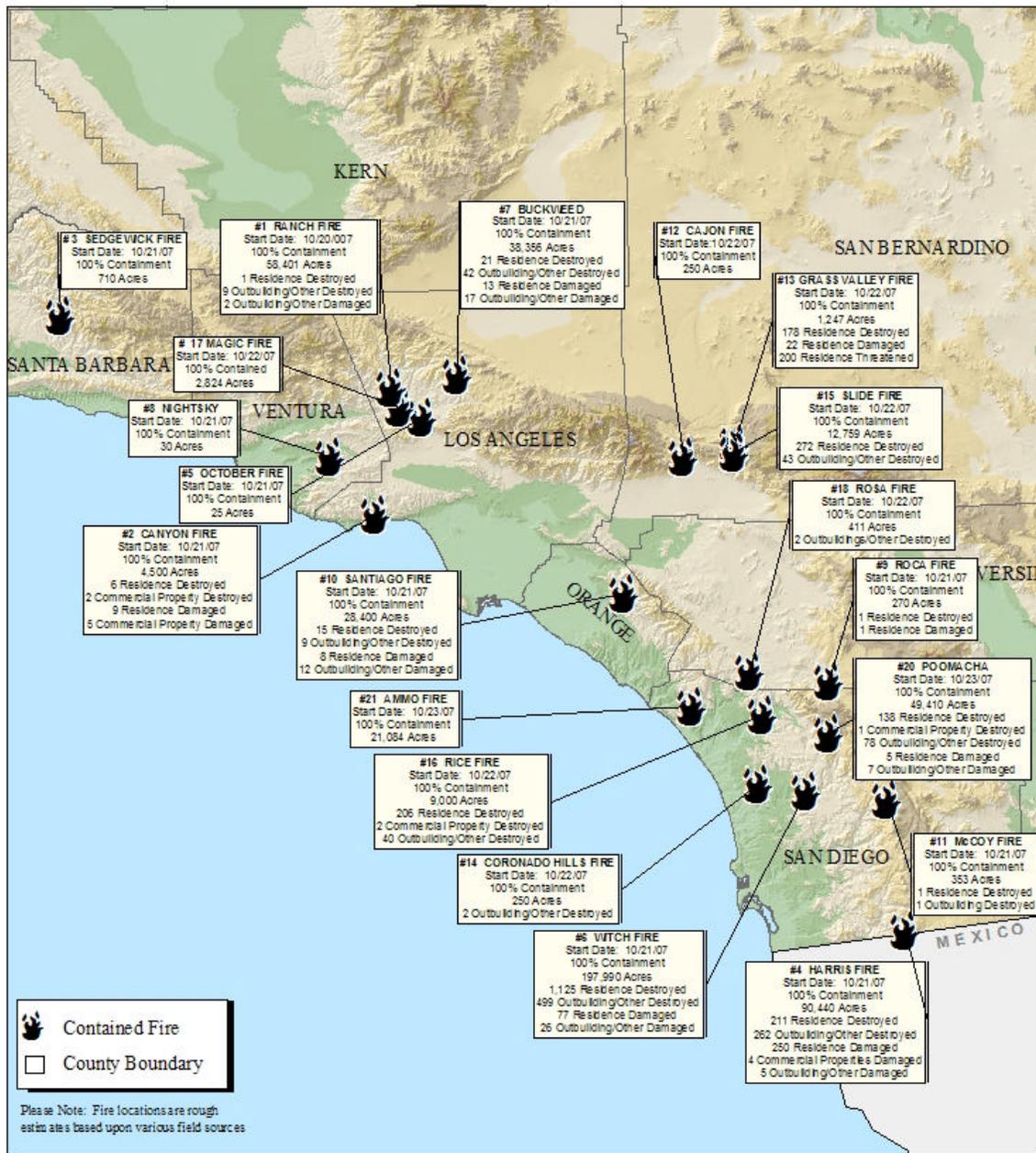
Permit Must be Obtained from a Ventura County Fire Station

Figure 2.b  
Air Quality Advisory Posted October 25 through Oct 29, 2007

**Attachment 1**  
**Locations of Southern California Fires**

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

as of 11/09/07 - 0600 Hours PST  
with Start Dates - Chronologically



Contained Fire  
 County Boundary

Please Note: Fire locations are rough estimates based upon various field sources



Created by OES - GIS, D. Huls  
November 9, 2007 Source: CALFIRE 2009  
/active\_investments/2007/Statewide/November/  
/projects/Statewide\_Fires\_110907\_0600

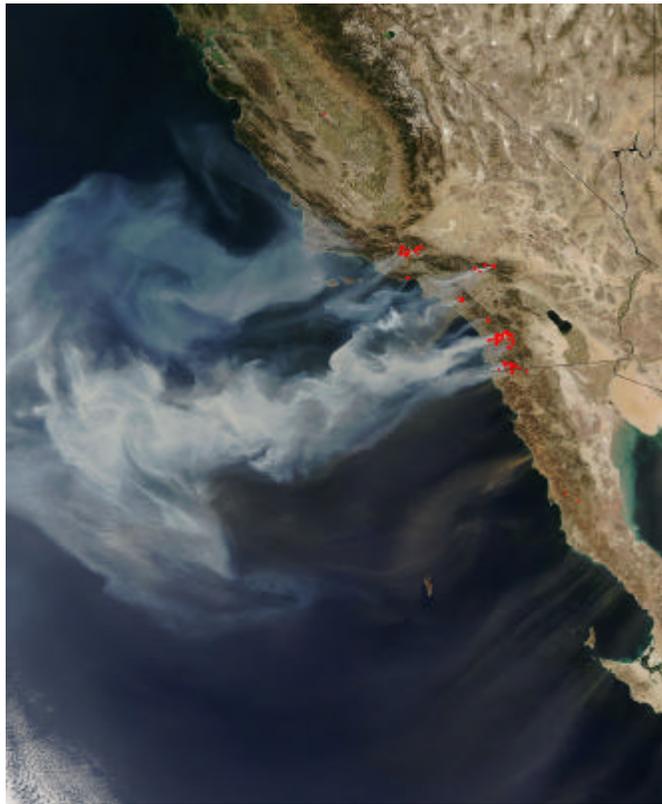
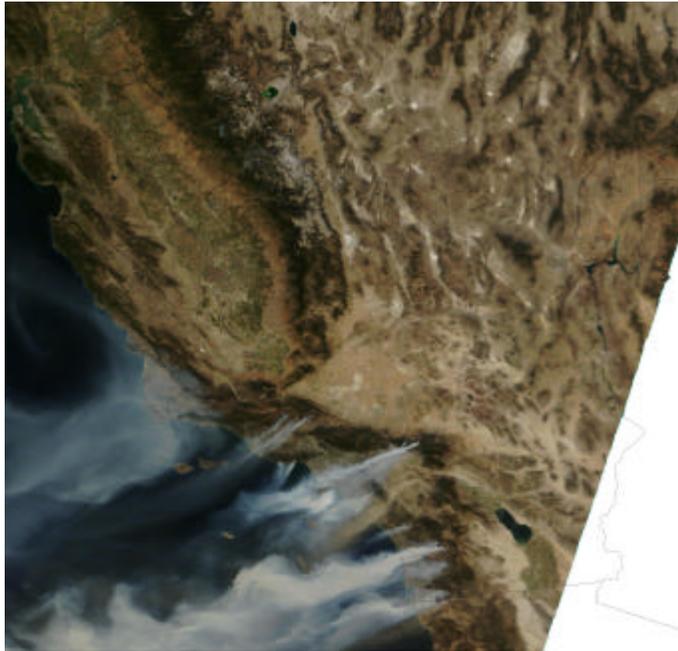


**Attachment 2**  
**Satellite Images**

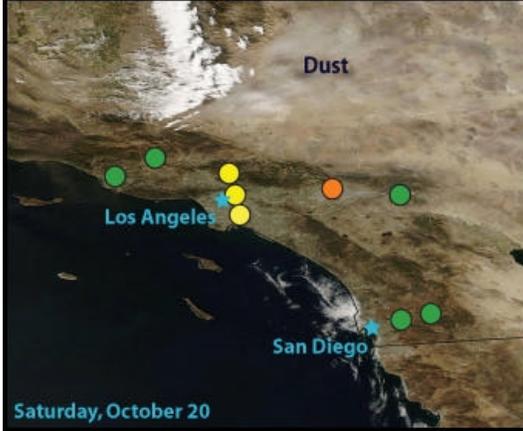
October 21, 2007



October 22, 2007



# Air Quality Episode: October 20-22, 2007



**Air Quality Index:**

- Good
- Moderate
- Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
- Unhealthy
- Very Unhealthy
- Hazardous

→ Satellite Detected Fire



NASA satellite image

**Synopsis:**  
Strong Santa Ana winds and low relative humidity in Southern California have led to several large wildfires and widespread blowing dust. These conditions have led to poor air quality across much of the region.



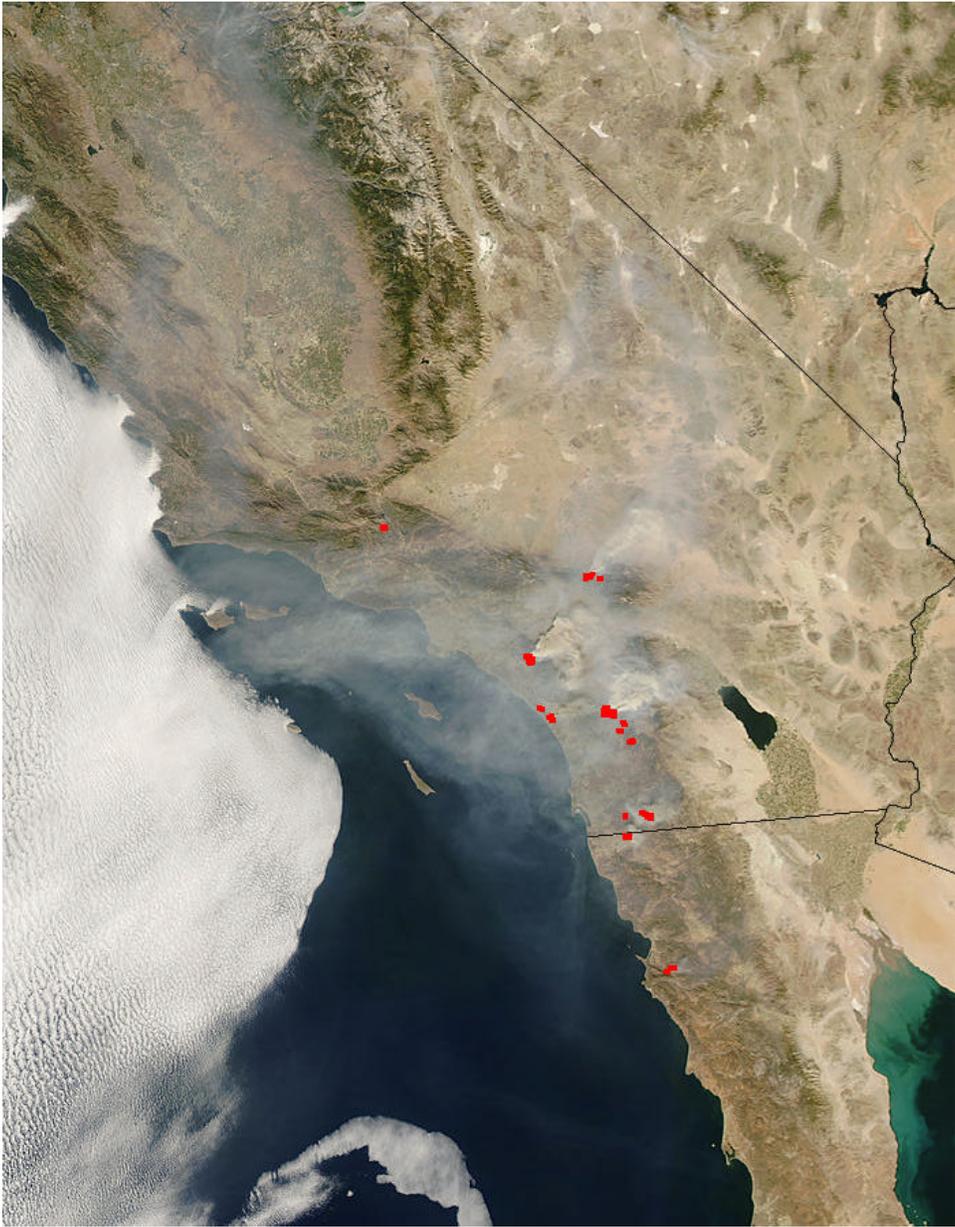
October 23, 2007



October 24, 2007



October 25, 2007



October 26, 2007



**Attachment 3**  
**Newspaper Articles**



## **Fires threaten homes in Santa Rosa Valley, Piru and Fillmore**

From staff and wire reports

Originally published 07:43 a.m., October 21, 2007

Updated 06:19 p.m., October 21, 2007

Two fires are threatening county homes and have led officials to evacuate areas of the Santa Rosa Valley, Piru and Fillmore.

The fires have coupled with heavy winds to bring thick, choking smoke to many areas of the county, much of it from a fire near Castaic that officials are worried may make it's way into Ventura County and the town of Piru.

One home has been damaged and 200 others are threatened in the Santa Rosa Valley as firefighters battle a blaze that started this morning.

Fire officials are recommending evacuations in the Lexington community in the Santa Rosa Valley due to a fire there that broke out late this morning.

The Lexington Community include Nightsky Drive, Riverrun Lane, Knob Lane, Crestline Drive, Lexington Hills Land and Ripple Creek lane.

The fire started at about 11 a.m. on Nightsky Drive had burned 40 acres and was 30 percent contained by 4 p.m. Fire officials expect the fire to be fully contained by 7 p.m.

The roof of one home on Presilla Road caught fire, but officials said at 4:10 p.m. that the home was not severely damaged.

Firefighters were battling a fire that had moved west of Piru toward Fillmore Sunday night, burning more than 2,000 acres and triggering evacuations.

The fire that began Saturday near Castaic Lake was north of Lake Piru in a an area known as Blue Point campground early Sunday evening, said Ventura County Fire Department information officer Nick Cleary. Residents of Piru Canyon were being recommended to evacuate. There were also precautionary evacuations for homes in Fillmore and Piru that bordered on wilderness areas.

"It's crossed the county line," Cleary said, noting the fire was being pushed west. "They're concerned that it could burn toward Fillmore, Piru and Santa Paula."

A shelter had been set up at Fillmore Veterans Memorial Building at 511 Second Street. Livestock was being taken at the Ventura County Fairgrounds and small animals at the Ventura County Animal Shelter in Camarillo.

Cleary said no injuries had been reported and that it was impossible to tell if any structures had been damaged because the fire was in inaccessible areas.

Area residents said they were wary but not yet alarmed.

"I feel very uncomfortable but safe," said Janet Bergamo, president of the Piru Neighborhood Council. "It's very disturbing. I had a tree blow down in my yard. It missed my car by an inch."

Thomas Rodriguez, a custodian at Piru School, held up a phone so a reporter could hear the winds whistling at gale force. He said he seen about eight fire engines and a bulldozer but also noted that things actually looked better late Sunday afternoon than earlier in the day.

About 320 people were fighting the fire in efforts coordinated by Ventura and Los Angeles county fire departments and by the U.S. Forest Service. Heli-tankers were dropping water and hand crews also were at work.

Cleary said people in Fillmore and Piru should be clearing brush from around their homes and organizing their exit strategies.

"Just be ready," he said, noting that the rash of firefighters had creating a juggling act for fire departments.

Ventura County Fire Capt. Barry Parker said the fire threats throughout the county would remain high as long as the Santa Ana winds continue to blow. The gusts are expected to continue today and conditions will be ever drier.

"Expect conditions to be the same if not worse," he said.

Smoke from the fires has led the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District to issue an air quality advisory for particles due to smoke and blowing dust.

"The blowing smoke is due to mini-wildfires in and around Ventura County. If you are experiencing respiratory effects you may want to remain inside, reduce physical activities, and or see a doctor if necessary," the VCAPCD wrote on its Web site.

Ventura County firefighters have also had their hands full putting out small brush fires, said Ventura County Fire Department spokesman Bill Nash.

"We've been running like crazy this morning," Nash said.

A fire near Moorpark started at 7 a.m. south of Tierra Rejada Road and north of Moorpark Road and was fully contained by 8:42 a.m.

But the Nightsky fire broke out at around 11 a.m. and it's unknown if those fires are connected.

Two other fires, one near Guiberson Road in Fillmore and another on near South Mountain Road in Santa Paula, were doused quickly, but firefighters are still on scene mopping up and watching for hot spots, Nash said.

Despite the remote locations of those fires, Nash said the department has responded with heavy resources.

"We've been planning for this event for several days now," Nash said.

There were also dozens of calls for downed trees and other wind-related damage, Nash said.

There have also been reports of scattered power outages around the county.

The National Weather Service in Oxnard has issued high wind warning for the county with winds up to 80 miles per hour expected in the mountains and possible gusts up to 100 miles per hour. The "strong damaging winds" are expected to continue through Tuesday, though lulls are expected in late afternoon and early evening hours of each day, the weather service officials said.

Evacuations have been recommended in areas of the Santa Rosa Valley, Piru and Fillmore as two fires are threatening homes in those areas, fire officials said.

Fire officials are recommending evacuations in the Lexington community in the Santa Rosa Valley due to a fire there that broke out late this morning.

The Lexington Community include Nightsky Drive, Riverrun Lane, Knob Lane, Crestline Drive, Lexington Hills Land and Ripple Creek lane.

The fire started at about 11 a.m. on Nightsky Drive and was 20 percent contained by 2:15 p.m. and was expected to be fully contained before nightfall, said Capt. Ron Oatman with the Ventura County Fire Department.

A fire that started near Castaic, known as the Ranch Fire, has pushed over the county line north of Lake Piru. Officials are evacuating residents from Piru Canyon and there are precautionary evacuations taking place in Piru in Fillmore.

The Ranch Fire broke out late Saturday and has consumed about 1500 acres in northeast Los Angeles County. The fire is burning southwest pushed by 20-30 mph winds with gusts to 60 mph. The terrain is rugged with medium to heavy chaparral brush typical of Southern California. This area has not burned for approximately 40 years, fire officials said.

Ventura County firefighters have also had their hands full putting out small brush fires, said Ventura County Fire Department spokesman Bill Nash.

"We've been running like crazy this morning," Nash said.

A fire near Moorpark started at 7 a.m. south of Tierra Rejada Road and north of Moorpark Road and was fully contained by 8:42 a.m.

But the Nightsky fire broke out at around 11 a.m. and it's unknown if those fires are connected.

Two other fires, one near Guiberson Road in Fillmore and another on near South Mountain Road in Santa Paula, were doused quickly, but firefighters are still on scene mopping up and watching for hot spots, Nash said.

Despite the remote locations of those fires, Nash said the department has responded with heavy resources.

"We've been planning for this event for several days now," Nash said.

There were also dozens of calls for downed trees and other wind-related damage, Nash said.

There have also been reports of scattered power outages around the county.

The National Weather Service in Oxnard has issued high wind warning for the county with winds up to 80 miles per hour expected in the mountains and possible gusts up to 100 miles per hour. The "strong damaging winds" are expected to continue through Tuesday, though lulls are expected in late afternoon and early evening hours of each day, the weather service officials said.





# Officials don't see weather helping to douse Malibu fire

## Fires rage in Southland

By Tony Biasotti

Monday, October 22, 2007

Dana Rene Bowler / Star staff Firefighters get ready to fight the Malibu fire near an apartment complex in the 23300 block of Pacific Coast Highway. Five homes were destroyed and others damaged in the fire, which started Sunday morning near Malibu Canyon Road.

Dana Rene Bowler / Star staff As flames burn on the hillside behind him, Henry Pope comforts his dog Tobey across from his apartment in the 22300 block of Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu. The fire, which started early Sunday morning, had burned 2,200 acres and was reported 10 percent contained as of late Sunday. Firefighters expect to battle the blaze all week.

Fires roared through Malibu, the Santa Rosa Valley and across Southern California on Sunday, fueled by dry brush and fanned by Santa Ana winds gusting more than 50 mph.

One fire destroyed a church, five homes, two commercial buildings and three businesses in Malibu, forcing hundreds of residents to escape with their valuables and animals ahead of clouds of choking smoke and ash. Sixteen other homes and five businesses also were damaged. One firefighter was slightly injured.

The Malibu fire was among at least 10 blazes that burned more than 20,000 acres Sunday, stretching from north of Santa Barbara to San Diego. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has declared a state of emergency in seven Southern California counties, including Ventura.

In Ventura County, firefighters battled a blaze that moved west of Piru toward Fillmore on Sunday night, burning as many as 6,000 acres, and in the Santa Rosa Valley, 40 acres burned and 250 homes were threatened.

The Malibu fire started around 5 a.m. in Malibu Canyon, just east of Pepperdine University. By 10 p.m., it had burned 2,200 acres and was 10 percent contained.

Officials believe that the fire may have started when power lines were blown down, but there is no official determination of the cause.

Firefighters will be fighting the blaze all week and aren't expecting any help from the weather, Los Angeles County Fire Capt. Kurt Schaefer said. The erratic winds, which are expected to blow through Tuesday, could change the direction of the fire at any time, he said. The winds also made it difficult to approach the fire safely and to drop water accurately.

"We are just at the beginning of our wind event," he said. "Anyone in this general area of Malibu needs to put themselves on alert, and they need to be prepared to evacuate."

The fire burned southeast from Malibu Canyon and by late morning had reached Malibu's central business district along Pacific Coast Highway.

Schaefer said officials aimed to keep it south of Mulholland Highway, west of Las Flores Canyon and east of Corral Canyon. More than 700 firefighters were fighting the blaze Sunday.

By Sunday afternoon, the flames were within about 10 yards of homes and businesses on the north side of PCH. Residents and business owners stood on their roofs and hosed down their properties. One person had landscapers douse a home with fire-retardant foam.

Nearly every business along PCH was closed, except for Colony House Liquors. Manager Michel Kerbage said he didn't consider closing even when the fire started to come down the hillside behind the store.

"Business is wonderful today," he said as a group of firefighters came in for soft drinks.

One Malibu resident, who gave only her first name, Lisa, was getting ready with her husband to leave their home on PCH. Putting photos and paperwork in the car, she said she was reluctant to leave because she had an 11-year-old iguana in a big tank in her home and wasn't able to move it.

"We're waiting until it gets right at our building," she said. "I feel safe here. The firefighters are doing a good job."

Andrew Kaufman took refuge from the smoke at the Malibu Country Mart near the ocean.

"It's been really bad for most of the day," said Kaufman, wearing a blue bandanna around his face as he sat in his car.

As Kaufman spoke, the wildfire consumed the landmark Castle Kashan, a stately fortesslike home with turrets and arched windows. Chunks of brick fell from the exterior of the burning building overlooking the coast.

The fire also toppled a Spanish-style tower at the Malibu Colony Plaza shopping center next to PCH, damaging four businesses.

"We're lucky it wasn't worse," Malibu resident Celia Andrews said.

Andrews, who lives off Malibu Canyon Road, said she felt lucky that her home was not damaged.

"For a while, it looked as if the fire could go any way," she said.

By midafternoon, much of the fire seemed to be centered on an area two miles east of Malibu Country Mart. The fire brought thick smoke to that part of PCH, which is dotted with stores and other outlets.

"I wouldn't be surprised if some of the buildings there don't make it," said Stu McNelis, manager of the Malibu Country Mart.

Sunday's fires began nearly four years to the day after two of the most damaging wildfires in Ventura County history.

On Oct. 25, 2003, the Simi Valley fire broke out. It caused no deaths, but burned 108,204 acres in Ventura and Los Angeles counties, and destroyed 37 homes and 27 outbuildings.

Two days earlier, on Oct. 23, the Piru fire started. It caused no deaths, but burned 63,991 acres in Ventura County and destroyed one home, one commercial structure and six outbuildings.

About 1,500 people have been evacuated from the Malibu fire, Los Angeles County Fire Chief Michael Freeman said. The fire department ordered evacuations in the Carbon Canyon and Big Rock areas, and lower Topanga Canyon and La Tuna Canyon. Residents of those areas can bring their large animals to Pierce College in Woodland Hills.

At Pepperdine University, where the fire department set up a command post, roughly 2,000 students, faculty and staff were being sheltered in three buildings on campus, spokesman Jerry Derloshon said.

PCH was closed between Kanan Dume Road to the west and Topanga Canyon Boulevard to the east. Malibu Canyon Road was closed between PCH and Piuma Road.

Agoura High School has been set up as an evacuation center, and Malibu High School will serve as an information center. Also, sheriff's deputies will be posted along PCH to help people.

— *The Associated Press contributed to this report.*



© Ventura County Star



## **Ranch Fire surrounds Piru, Nightsky Fire contained, small blazes doused**

Originally published 07:19 a.m., October 22, 2007

Updated 05:17 p.m., October 22, 2007

Officials have expanded evacuation recommendations to all of Piru and parts of Fillmore as fears over the Ranch Fire's spread intensify.

The Ranch Fire grew overnight from 10,000 to 29,000 acres. It was only 10 percent contained as of 7 a.m.

The Nightsky fire in the Santa Rosa Valley is now 100% contained with full control expected by about 5 pm.

Engines and crews remain on-scene putting out small fires within yesterday's burn area and providing structure protection. The fire was contained at 35 acres.

And firefighters are responding to a number of small fires in Ventura County this afternoon.

### **RANCH FIRE / PIRU**

The Ranch fire, a mile away from Highway 126, north of Piru, is starting to surround the town.

But firefighters aren't able to gauge exactly where the fire is headed because of difficult flying conditions, said Capt. Barry Parker of the Ventura County Fire Department. Wind gusts have reached up to 70 mph.

Firefighters are unable to directly fight the fire because of that wind.

Instead, they are working to protect structures.

"There isn't any amount of firetrucks you can stack up and make a difference on this fire," Parker said. ""You can't hardly stand up let alone get in front of it."

With winds expected to continue through Tuesday, firefighters are bracing for the worst. Parker said he's worried the Ranch fire will join the Castaic fire. They want to keep it from moving south of the 126.

"If this were the only fire in southern California we would have hundreds of firetrucks here," he said.

But there are fires all over southern California today.

"We can't expect a lot of resources," he said.

Although the fire has not reached the town of Piru, residents have been asked to evacuate to make it easier for firefighters to fight the blaze when it gets there. But so far, most people have been unwilling to go, Parker said.

"People have a false sense of security," he said.

Ventura County Batallion Chief Mike Sidlinger said because a lot of the area burned in a 2003 fire, there's a lot of young grass that is highly flammable, so the fire is moving quickly.

Jose Castaneda of Oxnard was in Piru today to help his children evacuate because some of them have asthma.

"This is the windiest I've ever seen it," he said.

He noted he has cousins from Arizona who are firefighters who have been dispatched to this area.

Gloria Devalos said Piru is a town that really works together and she thinks they can get through this.

"Around here we all look out for each other," she said.

Andy Arias was repairing a garage door that had been damaged in the wind the night before. He said he isn't too worried.

"We've got the river and the park" between the hillsides and the town, he said.

The Ventura County Sheriff's Department has issued recommended evacuations for Piru Canyon, Hasley Canyon and Oak Canyon. Precautionary evacuations have been issued for all of Piru south to Highway 126.

Officials have also recommended precautionary evacuation of Fillmore residents at Foothill Drive, Shady Lane, Ash Circle, Maple couort and Hunter Lane.

The evacuation center is at Fillmore Veterans Memorial Building, 511 Second St., 524-1500.

In Fillmore, roads are closed at C Street between Old Telegraph and Meadowlark. Highway 126 is closed between Main Street in Piru and Chiquita Canyon.

In Piru, streets closed include Hasley Canyon north of Del Valle, Piru Canyon at Orchard, and Piru Canyon at the lake.

One trailer, which may have been a residence at one point, was burned by the Ranch Fire, said Battalion Chief Ranger Dorn of the Ventura County Fire Department. No one was injured.

Wind, smoke and fire have Piru residents on edge.

"I slept in my clothes just to be ready," she said.

Molina and her neighbors were standing on the street watching the smoke over the hill.

Her neighbor Carlos Avila told his wife to pack up their medicine and some bare essentials in case things got worse.

At Lake Piru, deer were running about the charred hillsides as helicopters dipped water from the lake to use to fight nearby fires.

The westbound portion of Highway 126 is closed east of Piru and the eastbound portion is closed in Piru, according to the California Highway Patrol.

### **NIGHTSKY FIRE / SANTA ROSA VALLEY**

The Nightsky Fire, which threatened homes in the eastern Santa Rosa Valley, was declared fully contained at 7 a.m. today.

Officials expect the remaining portion of the blaze to be controlled, or put out, by 5 p.m. today, said Ventura County Fire Capt. Ron Oatman.

The area scorched by the blaze did not grow overnight, and was still estimated at 35 acres today, officials said this morning.

No injuries were reported in connection with the fire. The structural damage was limited to a portion of a garage roof at a hilltop estate on Nightsky Drive.

Fire investigators were at that location today, speaking with the homeowner. He declined to speak to a reporter about the incident.

Winds were still raking the Santa Rosa Valley region today, but the community's public school was in session and Santa Rosa Road was open to traffic and operating normally.

Firefighters continued working at various locations in the area, making sure no new problems occur and continuing their efforts to extinguish the smoldering fire.

Smoke continued to color the sky, most of the smoke coming from other brushfires to the northeast in Ventura and Los Angeles counties.

### **OTHER FIRES / INCIDENTS**

A new fire has started near Magic Mountain in Los Angeles County. The fire is currently estimated at 50 acres and is moving to the southwest. Smoke from this fire will certainly blow into Ventura County.

In Simi Valley, crews were fighting a fire in an attic of a home in the 3200 block of Valarie Avenue.

Crews from county and city fire departments are fighting a small brush fire near North Petit Avenue and Foothill Road in Ventura. About a third of an acre was burning about 1 p.m., according to the Ventura County Fire Department.

Ventura County crews have knocked down a fire this afternoon near Hitch Boulevard and Ventavo Drive in Moorpark.

The size of the fire was unknown, but the fire department said crews on the site said "a considerable amount of ground" had been burning in a lemon orchard.

County fire officials reported that a hand crew was mopping up any hot spots shortly after 3:30 p.m.

Firefighters worked to keep a fire in a Ventura barranca from igniting homes near Modoc Street and Nevada Avenue this afternoon. Crews from city and county fire departments responded to the fire about 4 p.m. and reported it knocked down by 4:45 p.m.

In Simi Valley, crews extinguished a fire in an attic of a home in the 3200 block of Valarie Avenue this afternoon. Four people, including two in the home and two bystanders, were checked out by medical personnel, but none had to be transported to a hospital.

The fire was reported under control by 1:30 p.m.

The Rose Avenue offramp on Highway 101 in Oxnard was closed about noon, as firefighters put out a small fire that burned debris and some palm trees nearby. The ramp was reported open again at 1 p.m.

Two other fires, one in Simi Valley and one between Ventura and Santa Paula, were reported earlier this morning. Both turned out to be small fires and as of 9:15 a.m. were not posing a serious threat, fire officials said.

All classes at Moorpark College have been cancelled, including classes at the High School at Moorpark College.

The Ventura County Sheriff's Department reports numerous trees are down throughout the county. There are also numerous accidents, including vehicles into trees and poles.

The Malibu Fire did not grow significantly overnight. It was at 2,200 acres as of early this morning. It is about 10 percent contained.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has proclaimed a state of emergency for the counties of Ventura, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego due to more than eleven major wildfires. Throughout the region, more than 30,000 acres have already burned, and more areas are threatened. The wildfires have burned homes, businesses and other structures.

Weather:

High-wind warnings are still in effect for Ventura and Los Angeles counties, according to the National Weather Service. The warnings will remain in effect until 3 p.m. Tuesday.

Winds will be from 30 to 45 mph throughout much of the county, with gusts up to 70 mph in some places. Winds are expected to be from 35 to 50 mph in the mountain areas, with gusts up to 80 or 90 mph.

The relative humidity will continue to be in the single digits and teens for the county throughout the day because of the Santa Ana winds.

Temperatures will be in the upper 80s and mid-90s today along the coast and in the mid 80s to mid 90s inland.



© Ventura County Star



## Nightsky blaze claims 35 acres by Moorpark

By Kathleen Wilson  
Monday, October 22, 2007

Guy Kitchens / Special to The Star Ventura County firefighters study the Nightsky fire, which broke out south of Moorpark on Sunday.

A fire smoldered and burned 35 acres Sunday in the hills and canyons north of Santa Rosa Road, an area dotted with million-dollar estates in a semi-rural area of unincorporated Ventura County.

By 8 p.m., the fire was 60 percent contained, with full containment expected this morning.

The cause of the fire was still being investigated Sunday evening. About 150 fire personnel worked to suppress the fire south of Moorpark.

By nightfall, the fire was burning deep in the canyons, where the ridge line sheltered the flames from the whipping wind, said incident commander Scott Hall.

A precautionary evacuation along Santa Rosa Road, north of Las Posas Road, was lifted around 9 p.m. Roadblocks set up in the area earlier in the day had been taken down by 8 p.m.

No injuries were reported, but the roof of one home burned in Lexington Hills, the gated community off Moorpark Road where the fire was spotted Sunday morning.

On Sunday afternoon, the Rathje family overlooked the charred hills where what is being called the Nightsky fire had gotten dangerously close to their home hours earlier.

Before that fire began, another smaller one in the same area started but was quickly extinguished by firefighters, they said.

Lars Rathje, 20, said two power lines were pushed by strong winds and collided. Sparks flew, and the hills below their home on Nightsky Drive were set ablaze, he said.

With the help of neighbors, Lars Rathje and his 15-year-old brother, Hans, helped squelch hot spots by shoveling dirt onto them. Charred lavender could be seen at the Rathje family's home.

The brothers' mother, Vicky Rathje, is a commercial lavender grower and said about 2 1/2 acres of lavender were destroyed.

"The most important thing is that everyone's safe," said Vicky Rathje, 46. "Things can be replaced."

Several Santa Rosa Valley residents, including Vicky Rathje, said the community came together to help each other put out fires near their properties.

Resident Andy Marsh, who also lives on Nightsky Drive, said a row of his avocado trees was destroyed. Marsh's home was not damaged, though, and he stayed to protect it, hosing down smoldering land.

No fire had ever come "this close to my house," said Marsh. "We were concerned."

Resident Bob Chapek was concerned enough to help fight the fire near his home, but none of his property was damaged.

Chapek said the fire almost jumped Nightsky Drive.

"We just didn't want it to spread," said Chapek, 48.

Chapek said he's seen four fires during the eight years he's lived in the neighborhood.

"We have so many fires here, this is almost a way of life," Chapek said.

County Fire Chief Bob Roper, who toured the fire scene Sunday afternoon, said the biggest problem was smoldering shredded bark used in landscaping around homes. The bark was catching fire and flowing downhill, starting new fires.

"The ember gets in there and sits there and smolders," he said.

Earlier in the day, the winds also hampered water drops from firefighting helicopters, Hall said. Fixed-wing planes had to drop fire retardant.

Rick Shurtz and his wife, Karen, were staying put in their home on Presilla Road but were watching to make sure the fire didn't flare up too close to their home. They had already sent their children to a friend's home in Camarillo.

Shurtz said they see fires every year but this was the closest.

Residents, some who live miles from the fire, were driving up to the command station at Santa Rosa School to see if they should evacuate. Many were keeping in touch through an active phone network of community residents.

"Everyone calls around to find out what's going on," said resident Chuck Matthews. "They stay pretty well informed. The valley is a pretty close-knit area."

Dee Van Daalenwetters, who collects classic cars, including a World War II-era Bugatti, said she was "trying very hard not to panic."

Van Daalenwetters and her husband had put their cat in a box and gathered up their photos after being told by firefighters they could be evacuated.

"These are the things that are important to us," she said. "It's important that we just get out — no casualties."

Carolyn Migliazzo, wearing a surgical mask as she stood in front of her house, was ready to evacuate her horse from her backyard in the Bridlewood neighborhood. She also had pointed her car facing the road, as directed by firefighters, "so they know you're home."

Jessica Douglas, a single mother of three, said she was across town at her niece's birthday party when "the sky went black."

"This is scary," she said after speaking with officials at the command station.

On Ridge Drive, a contingent of firefighters was calming homeowners and watching for spot fires in the valley beneath. They helped residents move lawn chairs and firewood and create 360-degree clearance zones around the homes.

Conditions were "very, very dry" with winds in the canyons gusting up to 80 miles per hour, said Vern Alstot, strike force leader with the Ventura City Fire Department.

Fire officials said winds were expected to continue through Tuesday.





## **6,000-acre fire north of lake is heading west**

### **Piru, Fillmore evacuations urged**

By Tom Kisken

Monday, October 22, 2007

Firefighters were battling a blaze that had moved west of Piru toward Fillmore on Sunday night, burning at least 6,000 acres and triggering evacuations.

As of 9 p.m. Sunday, the fire had no containment.

The fire, which began Saturday near Castaic Lake, was north of Lake Piru in an area known as Blue Point Campground by early Sunday evening, said Nick Cleary, Ventura County Fire Department information officer.

The department recommended that residents of evacuate several canyon areas, including Piru, Holser and Dominguez. There were also precautionary evacuations for homes in Fillmore and Piru that bordered on wilderness areas, Cleary said.

"It's crossed the county line," Cleary said. "They're concerned that it could burn toward Fillmore, Piru and Santa Paula."

A Red Cross shelter had been set up at Fillmore Veterans Memorial Building at 511 Second St. The city set up an emergency operations center at City Hall.

Carol Rogers, a Red Cross volunteer, was cautiously optimistic.

"Any fire worries me, but I have a lot of faith in our Fire Department," she said.

Livestock was being taken to the Ventura County Fairgrounds, with small animals sent to the Ventura County Animal Shelter in Camarillo.

Cleary said that no injuries had been reported and that it was impossible to tell if any structures had been damaged because the fire was in inaccessible areas.

Area residents said they were wary but not yet alarmed.

"I feel very uncomfortable but safe," said Janet Bergamo, president of the Piru Neighborhood Council. "It's very disturbing. I had a tree blow down in my yard. It missed my car by an inch."

Many people were already leaving the area, and Ventura County sheriff's deputies were in Piru telling people to be ready to evacuate.

"I'm worried," Richard Jimenez said as he stood on Main Street as winds whipped store signs and bent trees Sunday.

Jimenez, 22, said he'd gone to Lake Piru. "There were flames, and it looked like it was coming down pretty quick," he said.

Jimenez lives with his mother, who has already left the area. Jimenez said he'd heard that the fire had jumped Piru Dam. "I'm going to stay until they tell me to leave," he said.

Thomas Rodriguez, a custodian at Piru School, held up a phone so that a reporter could hear the wind whistling at gale force. He said he had seen about eight fire engines and a bulldozer go by, but also noted that things actually looked better late Sunday afternoon than earlier in the day.

At least 1,000 firefighters were working the fire in efforts coordinated by the Ventura and Los Angeles county fire departments and the U.S. Forest Service. Helicopter tankers dropped water and hand crews also were at work.

Cleary said people in Fillmore and Piru should be clearing brush from around their homes and organizing their exit strategies.

"Just be ready," he said, noting that Sunday's rash of fires had created a juggling act for fire departments.

"We're bouncing resources around from fire to fire as needed," Cleary said.

Richard Mewherter, who works at Piru Market and Liquor Store, said he couldn't see fire on the ridge, so he was staying put for the time being.

"If I see flames, then I am going to get in my truck and leave," said Mewherter, who acknowledged that there was a mood of alertness in Piru. "Things change quick. I've never seen wind this bad, and I was born and raised in California," the 68-year-old Piru resident said.

Ventura County Fire Capt. Barry Parker said fire threats throughout the county would remain high as long as the Santa Ana winds continued to blow. The gusts are expected to continue today, and conditions will be ever drier.

"Expect conditions to be the same if not worse," he said.



© Ventura County Star



## Supervisors get fire report

By Tony Biasotti

Originally published 11:37 a.m., October 23, 2007

Updated 11:37 a.m., October 23, 2007

The staggering wave of fires Southern California is experiencing could do more damage across the region than the destructive firestorms of four years ago, Ventura County Fire Chief Bob Roper told the county Board of Supervisors today.

Roper said this wave of fires is more intense than the big fires of 2003, and in cost — as far as money, property damage and loss of life — the toll will probably exceed the 2003 fires by 300 percent, or threefold, he said.

"In Southern California, what you're going to see is some whole communities wiped out when the smoke clears," Roper said.

Ventura County has not suffered the worst of the current fires. Roper said that in the past three days there have been 17 brushfires that started in the county, and every one of them — except the Nightsky Fire in the Santa Rosa Valley — were put out quickly before they could really spread.

The Nightsky Fire began Sunday and was contained on Monday.

County Agriculture Commissioner Earl McPhail told the supervisors, "We haven't heard of any (crop) damage from the fire but we have sustained a tremendous amount of damage from the wind. What didn't freeze in January is now on the ground," he said, referring in particular to tree crops such as citrus and avocados.

The board voted unanimously Tuesday to declare a state of emergency, a necessary step for certain types of relief assistance.





## Magic fire nears Simi; residents in some areas urged to leave

By Zeke Barlow , Sam Richard , Kathleen Wilson  
Tuesday, October 23, 2007

Photos by Chuck Kirman / Star staff Smoke billows from the Ranch fire near Lake Piru. The blaze had burned 41,000 acres and was 10 percent contained by Monday.

Dana Rene Bowler / Star staff Firefighters get ready to fight the Malibu fire near an apartment complex in the 23300 block of Pacific Coast Highway. Five homes were destroyed and others damaged in the fire, which started Sunday morning near Malibu Canyon Road.

Dana Rene Bowler / Star staff As flames burn on the hillside behind him, Henry Pope comforts his dog Tobey across from his apartment in the 22300 block of Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu. The fire, which started early Sunday morning, had burned 2,200 acres and was reported 10 percent contained as of late Sunday. Firefighters expect to battle the blaze all week.

A fire that started near the Six Flags Magic Mountain amusement park in Valencia on Monday afternoon was moving toward Simi Valley overnight, officials said.

Sheriff's deputies issued a precautionary evacuation order for unincorporated areas north of the city. Included were residents living in areas along Tapo Canyon, Ditch and Bennett roads.

Sheriff's Sgt. Don Aguilar said late Monday that he understood that the fire was about three miles east of the county line.

The Los Angeles County Fire Department, however, could not confirm that location.

"Right now it's 1,200 acres and growing, with 20 percent containment," said Sam Padilla, an inspector for the department. "It's not in Ventura County yet."

The Sheriff's Department conducted the Simi evacuations in unincorporated county territory, but city officials said it was not necessary yet within the city of 125,000.

The fire broke out shortly after 2 p.m. on the western side of Santa Clarita. The blaze more than doubled in size from 500 to 1,200 acres during the day, officials said.

Bill Nash, a spokesman for the Ventura County Fire Department, said that more than 100 fire engines and more than 300 firefighters from both counties were already committed to battling the blaze.

"We're concerned," Nash said Monday evening. "Simi Valley is a big city. There's a lot of property. We want to make sure it is protected. We are going to do everything we can to keep it from getting there, but we're going to be ready for it if it does. We have fire engines staging in Simi Valley as we speak."

Another fire was also headed west toward Castaic and Ventura County, but Los Angeles County fire officials said they had slowed its progress since the Buckweed blaze was reported at 1 p.m. Sunday. By Monday evening, about 5,500 homes and about 15,000 people had been evacuated, and the fire had consumed more than 35,000 acres. Fifteen homes were destroyed. "We have been able to hold it for the last four hours or so," said Padilla said.

### **Ranch fire near Piru, Fillmore**

Farther north, smoke filled the sky in Fillmore and Piru, as residents readied themselves Monday for the arrival of the flames of the Ranch fire, which slowly chewed through the hills above the small towns.

While many packed medicine and important papers, the majority of the residents stayed home despite fire officials' recommendations that residents evacuate.

As of Monday evening, the Ranch fire had burned 41,000 acres and was 10 percent contained. Three homes and four outbuildings had been destroyed. Along with homes, the condor sanctuary and the Sespe Wilderness are threatened by the fire, which began Sunday.

More than 700 firefighters battled the blaze Monday, fighting winds gusting to 55 mph. The eastern portion of the fire was moving south toward Highway 126 and was within 200 feet of the road on Monday evening, and the western edge was at Hopper Canyon, between Fillmore and Piru.

By the evening, wind gusts had died down along the 126 and had slowed to 20 mph in Piru Canyon.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has authorized federal funds to help fight the Ranch fire. The authorization makes FEMA funding available to pay 75 percent of the state's eligible firefighting costs.

The high winds fueled fires in cities throughout the county, with firefighters jumping on blazes in Simi Valley, Moorpark, Oxnard and Ventura and quickly extinguishing them.

In the afternoon, deer scampered about the charred hillsides as helicopters dipped water from the lake to be used to fight nearby fires.

Many in this small town have lived through fires before, including the massive October 2003 fire, which burned almost 64,000 acres. Despite a recommendation from fire officials that they evacuate, they said they wouldn't leave their homes until they could see the flames leaping from the ridges above town.

### **Resources are tight**

But Ventura County Fire Department Capt. Barry Parker warned against it because powerful gusts could easily fan the fire and push it into town.

Because of the number of fires around Southern California, resources are tight, Parker said.

"It's a false sense of security," he said. "Don't expect a lot of resources."

Fire officials also recommended evacuation for residents on the eastern edge of Fillmore because the fire was approaching Hopper Canyon Ridge.

Some Piru residents watched the smoky sky on Monday and went about their normal lives.

At Phil's Livestock, a ranch for animals used in Hollywood films, they were laying hose around the property but didn't expect to move the more than 300 yaks, buffaloes, flamingoes and other animals on the farm outside of Piru.

"They've been around bombs (in films), a little fire isn't going to bother them," said Mike Fanning, who was helping ready the farm.

Early Monday morning, Carlos Avila and his neighbors were leaning on a fence after taking their trash out, and looking out at the sky.

"It's been worse before," Avila said.

But he did tell his wife to pack up their medicine and some bare essentials in case things got worse.

Some residents were so worried they took firefighters' advice and moved into the Fillmore shelter.

By early afternoon Monday, about 12 families, most of them from Piru, were at the evacuation center at the Veterans Memorial Building, 511 Second St. in Fillmore.

Richard and Brandy Seher and their 2-year-old son, as well as the family's pets, arrived at the shelter after a night of strong winds and thick smoke.

"It definitely was not a good night for sleep," Brandy Seher said.

"This is our first disaster. We'll have a little experience if this ever happens again," she said.

Personnel with Ventura County animal services took the Seher family's pets to Simi Valley, she said.

Veronica Rodriguez, 23, of Piru, evacuated her son and two siblings from their home, took photographs and two or three days worth of clothes and diapers. They arrived Monday morning, but Rodriguez's mother and father stayed in Piru to wet down their house.

The fire was not much of a worry to her family, Rodriguez said. "We're kind of used to it. It always burns" in the Piru area, she said.

The shelter could be open all week, and overflow room is available at Fillmore High School and a youth center adjacent to the memorial building, said shelter manager Michael Jawitz. Assistance will be provided in transferring animals to shelters in Simi Valley, Camarillo or Ventura.

### **Fire moving south and west**

The city of Fillmore declared a local disaster Monday, enabling city officials to make emergency purchases and decisions, said Deputy City Manager Bill Bartels.

The Ranch fire moved south and west, circling Piru, but remained about five miles from the downtown area. Firefighters were staged all along Highway 126, to make sure the Ranch fire didn't jump the road.

Firefighters weren't able to gauge exactly where the fire was headed because of difficult flying conditions, Parker said.

Unable to attack the fire directly because of the windy conditions, firefighters mainly worked to protect structures.

Ventura County Battalion Chief Mike Sidlinger said because a lot of the area was burned in the 2003 fire, there's a lot of young grass that is highly flammable, so the fire moved quickly.

In other fires in Ventura County:

n Ventura County crews knocked down a fire Monday afternoon near Hitch Boulevard and Ventavo Drive in Moorpark. The size of the fire was unknown, but the fire department said crews at the site said "a considerable amount of ground" had burned in a lemon orchard. Fire officials reported a hand crew was mopping up hot spots shortly after 3:30 p.m.

n Firefighters worked to keep a fire in a Ventura barranca from igniting homes near Modoc Street and Nevada Avenue. Crews from city and county fire departments responded to the fire about 4 p.m. and reported it knocked down by 4:45 p.m.

n In Simi Valley, crews extinguished a fire in an attic of a home in the 3200 block of Valarie Avenue. Four people, including two in the home and two bystanders, were checked by medical personnel, but none had to be taken to a hospital.

n Crews from county and city fire departments fought a small brush fire near North Petit Avenue and Foothill Road in Ventura, where about a third of an acre burned.

n The Rose Avenue offramp on Highway 101 in Oxnard was closed about noon, as firefighters put out a small fire that burned debris and some palm trees nearby. The ramp reopened at 1 p.m.



© Ventura County Star



## Wildfires still making it difficult to play

By Derry Eads  
Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Practices and games by area high school athletic teams were canceled Tuesday as smoke from wildfires affected the air quality in Ventura County.

The status of Friday's loaded schedule of high school football games as well as the Ventura County Cross Country Championships could be decided as early as today.

Schools in Simi Valley, Moorpark and Fillmore were closed Tuesday. The Conejo Unified School District revoked all outside activities.

The Oxnard Union High School District proceeded cautiously, allowing PE classes to move outdoors in the morning. A shift in the wind early in the afternoon caused the cancellation of all activities, including nine Pacific View League boys' water polo, girls' tennis and volleyball games. The league's championship girls' golf tournament was moved to Thursday at Victoria Lakes.

All Cal Lutheran athletic teams practiced indoors Tuesday and are planning to continue doing so until further notice, said Scott Chisholm, the university's sports information director. Cal Lutheran has a men's soccer home game against Occidental scheduled for today at 4 p.m.

Moorpark College cancelled today's home Western State Conference wrestling match against Bakersfield.

Having already missed two days of practice, today is a critical for high school football programs.

Football teams need more than one workout day before a game, said Marmonte League president Rick Naranjo, the assistant principal in charge of athletics at Agoura.

"If Royal can practice Wednesday, it has agreed to play us (Agoura) on Friday night," said Naranjo. "If they can't, we will move the game to Saturday."

Moorpark is working on a backup plan for its scheduled home football game Friday against Calabasas, said athletic director Rob Dearborn.

"We might move it by one day," said Dearborn.

Fillmore moved its Frontier League girls' volleyball game from Tuesday to Monday. A decision will be made quickly on Friday's home football game against Malibu.

"Nobody's been able to practice," said Fillmore athletic secretary Lynn Cole. "We've been told that both football teams should have two days of practice."

Grace Brethren and Oaks Christian have discussed contingency plans for Friday's scheduled football game at Moorpark College.

"It is in a holding pattern right now," said Grace Brethren athletic director Paul Sper. "We may move the game to Saturday or Monday."

St. Bonaventure cancelled all outdoor practices. Its JV football team worked out at Our Lady of Assumption elementary school, said athletic director Mike Gianelli.

There have been no air quality problems at Westlake.

"It was a fantastic day on Monday," said athletic director Drew Passalacqua. "Our coaches still took all the necessary precautions." However, a district directive prevented outside practices Tuesday.

"We are anticipating that everybody will be able to play games on Thursday."

Westlake's gym was available for the Pepperdine University men's basketball team to practice on Tuesday, said Passalacqua.

At Thousand Oaks, school officials are approaching practice and game schedules on a day-by-day basis, said athletic coordinator Gary Walin.





## Major wildfires burning in California, by county

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Dana Rene Bowler / Star staff Firefighters get ready to fight the Malibu fire near an apartment complex in the 23300 block of Pacific Coast Highway. Five homes were destroyed and others damaged in the fire, which started Sunday morning near Malibu Canyon Road.

Dana Rene Bowler / Star staff As flames burn on the hillside behind him, Henry Pope comforts his dog Tobey across from his apartment in the 22300 block of Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu. The fire, which started early Sunday morning, had burned 2,200 acres and was reported 10 percent contained as of late Sunday. Firefighters expect to battle the blaze all week.

### Major wildfires burning in California, by county

#### Ventura County

Ranch fire: About 47,240 acres in the Castaic area near Piru. Ten percent contained; three homes, four outbuildings destroyed, 500 homes and 50 commercial buildings threatened. No injuries reported.

#### San Diego County

Witch fire: About 196,420 acres in northern San Diego County from Witch Creek to Rancho Santa Fe. One percent contained; 500 homes, 100 businesses and 50 outbuildings destroyed; 375 other structures damaged, including 250 homes and 50 businesses. Two civilians and 12 firefighters injured.

Harris fire: About 72,000 acres about 70 miles southeast of San Diego north of the border town of Tecate. Ten percent contained; 200 to 500 structures destroyed or damaged. 1,500 homes threatened. One civilian killed, 21 civilians and five firefighters injured.

Rice fire: At least 7,500 acres in Fallbrook in northern San Diego County. Ten percent contained; 206 homes and two commercial properties destroyed. One firefighter injured.

Poomacha fire: 20,000 acres on the La Jolla Indian Reservation and in northeastern San Diego County. No containment. Fifty homes destroyed. Ten firefighters injured.

#### Orange County

Santiago fire: About 18,000 acres east of Irvine. Thirty percent contained; 10 homes, two outbuildings destroyed. Four minor injuries to firefighters. About 3,000 people evacuated.

#### Los Angeles County

Buckweed fire: About 37,812 acres south of Agua Dulce in northeastern Los Angeles County. Eighty percent contained; 32 homes, 17 outbuildings and 40 vehicles destroyed. Four people injured. About 15,000 people and 5,500 homes evacuated.

Canyon fire: About 4,500 acres in coastal community of Malibu. 75 percent contained; six homes, two businesses, a church destroyed; nine homes, five commercial buildings damaged. Four people injured. About 1,500 people, including several celebrities, evacuated.

Magic fire: About 1,750 acres in northern Los Angeles County, including Stevenson Ranch. 93 percent contained with full containment expected today. No damages or injuries. The fire was accidentally started by construction workers welding in the area.

#### San Bernardino County

Slide fire: More than 4,000 acres in Green Valley Lake area of the San Bernardino Mountains east of Lake Arrowhead. At least 125 homes destroyed, 400 homes threatened and several communities evacuated.

Grass Valley fire: More than 1,000 acres in Grass Valley area northwest of Lake Arrowhead in the San Bernardino Mountains. At least 300 homes destroyed, 10,000 homes threatened. Many mountain resort communities and a hospital evacuated.

#### Santa Barbara County

Sedgewick fire: 710 acres near Los Olivos. Fully contained. No evacuations. No homes destroyed and no reports of injuries.

— The Associated Press



© Ventura County Star



## 'Too close,' says Piru rancher fighting to keep flames at bay

By Zeke Barlow  
Wednesday, October 24, 2007

James Glover II / Star staff A thoroughbred runs in its pen Tuesday as the Ranch fire burns to the borders of 6,000-acre Rancho Temescal in Piru.

Dana Rene Bowler / Star staff Firefighters get ready to fight the Malibu fire near an apartment complex in the 23300 block of Pacific Coast Highway. Five homes were destroyed and others damaged in the fire, which started Sunday morning near Malibu Canyon Road.

Dana Rene Bowler / Star staff As flames burn on the hillside behind him, Henry Pope comforts his dog Tobey across from his apartment in the 22300 block of Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu. The fire, which started early Sunday morning, had burned 2,200 acres and was reported 10 percent contained as of late Sunday. Firefighters expect to battle the blaze all week.

Ever since Tim Cohen bought 6,000 acres in the shadow of the massive dam that holds back Lake Piru, the dam breaking has been the least of his worries.

"In seven years, I've had the '05 floods, the '06 fire and the '07 freeze," he said of his farm, Rancho Temescal, which fills much of Piru Canyon. "And now the '07 fire."

Though the Ranch fire had been mainly tickling his property lines over the past few days, it reared its ugly head Tuesday afternoon when winds picked up and fanned flames into a 35-foot-high horseshoe-shaped inferno that ringed his ranch.

After a few tense moments of high flames coming close to his property, firefighters and Cohen's workers kept the fire at bay.

Most people in Piru and Fillmore were spared the effects of the fire Tuesday beyond the heavy smoke that clogged the sky. The fire loomed in the hills above the towns during the afternoon, coming about a mile from Piru and about two miles from Fillmore, but not making any dramatic advances toward either locale, said Ventura County Fire Department spokesman Nick Cleary.

Piru could be out of harm's way by tonight if the weather cooperates, Cleary said.

By Tuesday night, 1,264 firefighters were on the scene after coming from around the state to help out.

The 47,240-acre Ranch blaze began moving west into the Sespe wilderness area Tuesday evening, where the brush is thick after years without fire, he said.

"It's a concern because that fuel hasn't burned in any recorded time," Cleary said.

### **Homes, property destroyed**

Plans were being drawn up to get bulldozers there this morning to re-create fire lines that were made during last year's Day fire, he said. As of Tuesday evening, the Ranch fire was a mile from Fillmore and only 10 percent contained. It had destroyed three homes, four outbuildings and 14 boats, though only one home, an abandoned trailer, was in Ventura County.

With the fire burning around Lake Piru, Cohen spent the past few days getting ready for what seemed inevitable.

To ready his ranch, he filled his water tanks with 2 million gallons of water, laid fire hose around the property and kept sprinklers trained on the grassy fields where his prize horses with names like Suances and High Demand gallop.

"You can't stop an earthquake, and a flood is a flood, but with a fire you can do something to stop it," he said, as the fire climbed through the hills above his ranch.

He was confident the blaze would stay on the far side of Piru Canyon Road, where firefighters had protected a building filled with agricultural chemicals. He was hopeful it wouldn't jump the road, where an ornate barn houses some of his 85 thoroughbred horses and other buildings house ranch hands.

Then the wind changed directions. And strengthened, too.

"That's not where I want it," he said as he eyed a cluster of small flames that jumped the road and chewed through a hillside of dry brush. In moments the flames grew, burning more of the hillside as black smoke darkened the sky.

"Now I'm worried. That's too big. This is not good," he said.

The flames quickly marched up the hillside in two directions, toward the farmworker housing and deeper into the canyon. Flames climbed up the hill and towered over Piru Canyon Road.

### **A larger task at hand**

Audel Dominguez was driving down the road after feeding his cattle when an ember dropped onto a hay bale in his pickup truck and sparked a small, smoldering fire. A firefighter doused it before turning to the larger task at hand.

A "hot shot" crew quickly dug a line in front of one side of the fire to keep it from spreading down the canyon toward Piru about six miles away. As the fire grew, three rabbits scampered from the oncoming flames. Another wasn't fast enough and limped away with singed hair and burned skin.

The fire charged in the other direction, toward the farmworker housing and the propane tanks behind it.

Cohen had done aggressive weed abatement over the years, cutting a wide swath around his property, and hoped it would pay off. Workers climbed atop water trucks and sprayed down their homes as the flames grew to 30 feet on the hill behind them and firefighters kept the blaze from advancing. At times, the sky was completely dark. Within 10 minutes, the flames had passed the houses and moved toward the Santa Felicia dam, a massive concrete structure that couldn't burn. By day's end, all the hills around Cohen's property had burned, destroying only brush. His workers started going back to feeding the horses and other ranch chores.

"Too close," Cohen said as he looked at the smoldering fires. "Too close."



© Ventura County Star



## Editorial: Smoky precautions

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Although not everyone in Ventura County is currently affected by the fires in the county and across Southern California, virtually everyone is feeling the effects of the smoke.

For most areas of Ventura County, air quality today is at the upper end of the orange category, meaning it is "unhealthy for sensitive groups" — children, people with asthma and heart or lung disease, the elderly and pregnant women.

The worst air quality registered in the county was in Fillmore on Monday, where air quality spiked into the red category, which is "unhealthy." That is a result of the Ranch Fire, which was burning toward Highway 126 on Tuesday.

Although air quality differs from city to city, the best advice is to use common sense. That means if it looks smoky outside, people should stay indoors and not do anything that requires heavy exertion.

Since children, especially those in sports, are the most likely to be exerting themselves outdoors, coaches and teachers should assess the situation before letting children play outside. Children are especially vulnerable to bad air because their airways are still developing and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults.

When indoors, people should keep doors and windows closed and put the air conditioner in "recirculate mode" if there is one. Drinking water also helps the body filter smoke particles. Consider bringing pets indoors. If the air is bad for humans, it's bad for pets, too.

Once the fires are out, we will all be breathing easier, literally and figuratively.

Air quality sites

[www.vcapcd.org/Forecast.aspx](http://www.vcapcd.org/Forecast.aspx)

<http://www.epa.gov>

<http://www.airnow.gov/>

<http://www.aqmd.gov/smog/>

The phone number for the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District is 662-6960.



© Ventura County Star



## Evacuations lifted for Ventura County, containment of Magic and Ranch fires expected

From staff reports

Originally published 07:03 a.m., October 24, 2007

Updated 03:48 p.m., October 24, 2007



Winds have died down, progress of all Ventura County fires has stalled, containment of the Ranch and Magic fires is expected later today, evacuations have been lifted and most road closures lifted.

In addition, while smoke from the fires is still present and expected to continue, officials say air quality is improving. However, they warn there can still be some times when air will be unhealthy and they continue to urge residents to use caution.

Fire fighters from across Ventura County are continuing to battle the Ranch Fire at this hour from the ground and from the air.

The fire, which crossed into Ventura County two days ago, was 45 percent contained as of 10:45 a.m. today.

Fire officials hope to have it fully contained by Oct. 31.

The fire has so far scorched 51,000 acres. The fire's western most flank has reached Oat Mountain, west of Piru Lake, said Capt. Pete Jensen of the Ventura County Fire Department.

"Fortunately for everyone, the winds are cooperating," Jensen said.

Weary fighters are going to a park in Fillmore where they are resting up before going out again to fight the fires again.

The mood at the temporary fire camp in Fillmore seemed more relaxed this morning, thanks in good part to the weakening Santa Ana winds.

Those winds made it very difficult to fight the more than dozen fires that have sprang up Southern California during the past four days. Firefighters would try to establish a containment line, only to have the winds carry embers over their heads and onto parched brush and scrubland behind them.

Despite the difficult topography, firefighters are having an easier time with the Ranch Fire than they did either the recent Day or Zaca fires, said Fred Burris, a captain with the Ventura County Fire Department.

Firefighters had to contend with thicker brush with the Day and Zaca fires, Burris said.

As firefighters have gained the upper hand in controlling the blazes here in Ventura County and northern Los Angeles County, many have been sent south to fight the fires in San Diego County, the scene of some of the most devastating infernos this week.

Some 40 firefighters from across Ventura County, including the cities of Ventura, Oxnard and Santa Paula, as well as Ventura County firefighters, are now in San Diego County, Jensen said.

Back in Ventura County, officials were able to able to reopen Highway 126 today. They also rescinded a recommended evacuation offer for residents of Piru.

An emergency center set up in Fillmore for those who left their homes, is scheduled to close at 6 p.m. today.

Meanwhile, six military cargo planes are waiting for word on where to join the air strike against the fires at Lake Arrowhead and San Diego.

The six C-130 aircraft are outfitted with a high-tech firefighting system, which sits inside the cargo bay. It can spray a 100-foot-wide area that's a quarter-mile long.

Each system contains five pressurized tanks capable of carrying 2,500 gallons of fire retardant.

The planes, which are based in Colorado Springs, Colo., Cheyenne, Wyo. and Charlotte, N.C., are being made available thanks to an agreement between the U.S. air National Guard and the U.S. Forest Service.

A wind advisory, which has been in place across the region since Sunday, was canceled today. The National Weather Service says heavier winds will persist at higher elevations today and Thursday.

But ocean winds are expected to return to much of coastal Ventura County later today. The winds are expected to be around 10 mph.

Temperatures across much of Ventura County are expected to remain in the mid to upper 90s today, despite the weakening Santa Anas.

As the high pressure system over the Great Basin in Utah moves east, temperatures here are expected to drop over the coming days, said Bill Hoffer, a spokesman for the National Weather Service in Oxnard.

Hoffer said temperatures should be back to the mid-70s by Sunday or Monday.

The air quality in Ventura County, which was blanketed with smoke during the first half of this week, also is improving, said Mallory Ham, an air-pollution meteorologist for the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District.

While the county continues to receive some smoke from the nearby fires, much of that smoke is higher up in the sky.

<sup>3</sup>We don't have nearly as much of it at the ground level as we did earlier this week,<sup>2</sup> Ham said.

The air quality is expected to improve in the days to come.

A shelter, which had been set up at the Ventura County Fairgrounds earlier this week for large animals, also is closing today. However, pet owners can still take their smaller animals to a similar shelter in Camarillo at 600 Aviation Drive. The shelter's phone number is 805-388-4341.

Here's the latest on county incidents from the Ventura County Fire Department:

**Ranch Incident:** As of 6 am, October 24, the fire has burned 51,337 acres and is 45% contained. This acreage is down from some previous reports due to more accurate mapping flights. 1,264 personnel are currently assigned to the incident. Seven structures - three residences and four outbuildings - have been destroyed. Containment is expected October 31.

**Where:** Active fire came through portions of the Condor Preserve in the Hopper Canyon area, but none of the facilities were destroyed. The fireline east of Piru is secure. The western progress of the fire was slowed by helicopter water drops in the area of Oat Mountain. The fireline between Piru and Fillmore will be the focus of the firefighting efforts today.

**Evacuations:** ALL FIRE-RELATED EVACUATIONS IN VENTURA COUNTY HAVE BEEN LIFTED. Residents of western Los Angeles County should call the Los Angeles County Sheriffs Department (661-255-1121)for evacuation information in their areas.

The American Red Cross Shelter at 511 Second Street in Fillmore is scheduled to close at 6 p.m.

**Road Closures:** Fillmore: C St. between Old Telegraph and Meadowlark to accommodate firefighting equipment. ALL OTHER FIRE-RELATED ROAD CLOSURES IN VENTURA COUNTY HAVE BEEN LIFTED. Residents of western Los Angeles County should call the Los Angeles County Sheriffs Department (661-255-1121)for road closure information in their areas.

**Magic Fire:** 8:15 am, October 24 -- The fire that started near Magic Mountain in Los Angeles County has been stopped 3 miles east of the Ventura County line and is now being handled by the Los Angeles County Fire Department. 105 personnel are currently assigned to the incident to improve the fire-lines and mop-up hot spots. The fire is being contained at approximately 2,824 acres. It is 93% contained with full containment expected by 8:00 am on the 24th, with full control by 8 pm. Some smoke from this fire may still blow into the Simi Valley and Westlake Village.

**Evacuations:** ALL FIRE-RELATED EVACUATIONS AND ROAD CLOSURES IN VENTURA COUNTY HAVE BEEN LIFTED. (Residents of western Los Angeles County should call the Los Angeles County Sheriffs Department (661-255-1121)for evacuation information in their areas.)

Fire officials expect to have the 4500 acre Malibu fire fully contained by this afternoon, said Capt. Kurt Schaefer of the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

The fire was 75 percent contained as of 8 p.m. Tuesday.

Though the fire area is not completely contained, there are no flames and hardly any embers on the fire line, said Schaefer.

From the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District:

Due to the smoke from many of the wildfires in and around Ventura County, it is possible that almost all areas of Ventura County will encounter smoke at some time. Air Quality in areas affected by the smoke are considered to be unhealthful. The Santa Ana winds are decreasing and the air quality is getting better.

And there will be periods of time where the air quality is "Good." And there will be periods when it will be "Unhealthy". If you smell smoke, be cautious and use common sense to protect your family's health. Everyone, especially people with heart or lung disease (including asthma), older adults and children should limit time spent outdoors,

and limit prolonged or heavy exertion. If you or your family is experiencing health problems, contact your health care provider. This advisory will be extended as conditions warrant.



© Ventura County Star



## Crews have upper hand on several area fires

By John Scheibe  
Thursday, October 25, 2007

Firefighters from across Ventura County are continuing to battle the Ranch fire from the ground and from the air.

The fire, which crossed into Ventura County two days ago, was 70 percent contained Wednesday evening. Fire officials hope to have it fully contained by Wednesday.

The fire had scorched 54,716 acres by Wednesday evening. The fire's western-most flank had reached Oat Mountain, west of Lake Piru, said Capt. Pete Jensen of the Ventura County Fire Department, said today.

"Fortunately for everyone, the winds are cooperating," Jensen said.

Malibu's Canyon fire was fully contained by Wednesday evening. The fire so far burned 4,565 acres and injured four firefighters, according to the Los Angeles County Fire Department. All of the injuries were minor.

The Buckweed fire burned 38,356 acres in the Agua Dulce, Canyon Country and Saugus area before it was fully contained Wednesday. Four people suffered minor injuries from that fire, including three firefighters. Another person was severely injured.

The Magic fire near Santa Clarita is fully contained after consuming 2,824 acres.

About 1,260 firefighters fighting the Ranch fire are camping at Shiells Park in Fillmore.

Weary firefighters are going to Shiells Park in Fillmore where they are resting up before going out again to fight the fires. The mood at the temporary fire camp where some 1260 firefighters are based, seemed more relaxed Wednesday, thanks in good part to the weakening Santa Ana winds. Those winds, which reached gale-force speeds, made it very difficult to fight the more than dozen fires that sprang up across Southern California during the past four days.

Firefighters would try to establish a containment line, only to have the winds carry embers over their heads and onto parched brush and scrubland behind them.

Firefighters were also hampered by the often forbidding terrain with its steep canyons and cliffs.

Despite the difficult topography, firefighters are having an easier time with the Ranch fire than they did with either the 2006 Day fire or this year's Zaca fire, said Fred Burris, a captain with the Ventura County Fire Department.

Firefighters had to contend with thicker brush with the Day and Zaca fires, Burris said.

No smoke was visible around Fillmore on Wednesday afternoon, and things seemed to be getting back to normal.

"It's cleared up quite a bit," said Tania Melgoza, owner of Estrella Market in downtown Fillmore. "On Sunday it looked like it was nighttime at 2 in the afternoon," she said.

Melgoza said smoke from the fire made it hard to breathe for several days. She closed her door to keep falling ash from getting into the store.

As firefighters have gained the upper hand in controlling the blazes herein Ventura County and northern Los Angeles County, they have been sent south to fight the firestorm in San Diego County, the scene of some of the most devastating infernos this week.

Some 40 firefighters from across Ventura County, including the cities of Ventura, Oxnard and Santa Paula, as well as Ventura County firefighters, are now in San Diego County, Jensen said.

Back in Ventura County, officials were able to reopen reopened Highway 126 today on Tuesday/Wednesday. They also canceled rescinded a recommended evacuation for residents of Piru.

An emergency center set up in Fillmore for those who left their homes is closed today/Wednesday evening.

Meanwhile, six military cargo planes stationed at Channel Islands Air National Guard are slated to join the airstrike against the fires in Southern California. When, and where, they will be used has yet to be determined.

The six C-130 aircraft are outfitted with a high-tech firefighting system, which sits inside the cargo bay. It can spray a 100-foot-wide area that's a quarter-mile long.

Each system contains five pressurized tanks capable of carrying 2,500 gallons of fire retardant.

The planes, which are based in Colorado Springs, Colo., Cheyenne, Wyo., and Charlotte, N.C., are being made available thanks to an agreement between the U.S. Air National Guard and the U.S. Forest Service.

Judging by the weather forecast, the planes will not have to deal with the gale-force winds of earlier this week. The wind advisory, in place across the region since Sunday, was canceled Wednesday.

The National Weather Service says heavier winds will persist at higher elevations, but ocean winds are expected to return to much of coastal Ventura County later today. The winds should be about 10 mph.

Temperatures across much of the county Ventura County are expected to remain in the mid- to upper 80s today, despite the weakening Santa Anas. As the high pressure system over the Great Basin in Utah moves east, temperatures here are expected to drop over the coming days, said Bill Hoffer, a spokesman for the National Weather Service in Oxnard.

Hoffer said temperatures should be back to the mid-70s by Sunday or Monday.

The air quality in Ventura County, which was blanketed with smoke during the first half of this week, also is improving, said Mallory Ham, an air-pollution meteorologist for the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District.

While some smoke from the nearby fires continues to make its way through the county, much of it is higher in the sky.

"We don't have nearly as much of it at the ground level as we did earlier this week," Ham said. The air quality is expected to improve in the days to come.

A shelter for large animals set up at the Ventura County Fairgrounds earlier this week for large animals, also is closing today. County officials have offered to shelter large animals from San Diego County. Officials in San Diego had yet to respond to the county's offer as of late Wednesday afternoon.

Pet owners can still take their smaller animals to a shelter in Camarillo at 600 Aviation Drive. The shelter's phone number is 388-4341.

Those wanting to take their cats and dogs to the Agoura Hills Animal Shelter, 29525 Agoura Road, can still do so. A worker at the shelter, located at 29525 Agoura Road, said many cat and dog owners were coming back to the shelter today to pick up their animals that they'd left there earlier in the week because of the fires. The shelter's phone number is 818-991-0071.

The animals at Moorpark College's teaching zoo, including a lion, tiger and hyenas, were taken back to the facility Wednesday.

The animals were taken off campus late Monday night and early Tuesday morning as the air around the college became clogged with smoke.

— *Staff writers Adam Foxman and Charles Levin contributed to this report.*



© Ventura County Star



## Ranch blaze not worst firefighters have faced

By Adam Foxman  
Thursday, October 25, 2007

Although strong, unpredictable winds made the Ranch fire dangerous and difficult to fight, local firefighters said they have seen worse fires.

Once the high winds that drove the fire died down Tuesday night, firefighters were able to quickly beat back the blaze. Most of the flames were out by Wednesday, and firefighters had cut firebreaks around at least 70 percent of the burned area by Wednesday.

The 54,716 acres burned by the Ranch fire are steep and rugged terrain. Like many of California's fire-prone areas, the more than 51,000 acres burned by the Ranch Fire are steep and rugged. But unlike the blazes that firefighters called the toughest to fight, the brush that fueled the Ranch fire was relatively light.

"This exact fire — at least on this end — is fairly routine," said Ventura County Fire Capt. Fred Burris said.

"The Day fire was really challenging because it was mostly wilderness," said Burris, who met with Hotshots "hot shot" crews at a Fillmore park Wednesday to discuss the day's plan of attack.

The 2006 Day fire and this year's Zaca fire burned large swaths of Los Padres National Forest, including some areas that hadn't burned in as much as 100 years. The combination of abundant fuel and the fires' remote locations made them extremely difficult to fight, Burris said.

Much of the Ranch fire, at least on the Fillmore side, burned near rural farmland that had seen fire recently, so the brush was comparatively light, Burris said. Firefighters battling the Ranch fire were able to drive engines up roads near the blaze and bring in bulldozers to cut fire lines.

The lighter brush in the Ranch fire area also made it easier to mop up.

Near the Lake Piru dam, firefighters weren't finding many hot spots or smoldering embers on the fourth day of the fire. The ground was blackened where the fire had burned through light brush.

"It's not like your timber fires," which can smolder for as much as a week, said Art Tranberg, a safety officer for the Sierra National Forest, who has been fighting fires for 51 years.

"We're in pretty good shape here," Tranberg said as he looked out toward the dam.

But while the Ranch fire wasn't the hardest blaze some California firefighters can remember, it wasn't a cakewalk either.

Limited resources and high winds that reduced visibility and sent the fire racing across the landscape made the Ranch fire challenging and hazardous, said Capt. Barry Parker, a spokesman for the Ventura County Fire Department.

The El Cariso Hotshots Crew arrived at the fire from Lake Elsinore on Sunday morning and worked for 32 hours straight because no other crews were available to replace them, said crew member Cyrus Galvan, 24.

At one point in the fire's first days, the wind was blowing about 70 mph and Galvan saw a half-mile stretch of hillside go up in flames in about a minute, he said. "It was too dangerous to do anything ... all we could do was protect structures," Galvan recalled.

While the El Cariso crew was working to cut fire lines Tuesday in Violin Canyon in Castaic, the wind changed direction and the crew had to run into a previously burned area to escape the flames, Galvan said. "We were running and the flames were at our backs."

The experience was a little scary, but Galvan had been in similar situations before during his year on the crew, he said. "When you go direct, stuff happens like that. ... You always have to have a safety zone."



© Ventura County Star



## Firefighters mopping up at Ranch fire site

From staff reports  
Friday, October 26, 2007

Firefighters continued Thursday mopping up the Ranch fire, which has burned close to 55,800 acres between Castaic and Fillmore since it began Saturday night.

Most of the flames have been knocked down, and firefighters had cut containment lines around 80 percent of the burned area by Thursday night, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

Some firefighters were released to work on other fires this week, but 905 firefighters continued working Thursday to extinguish the remainder of the flare-ups and make sure the fire is out.

The blaze destroyed one home and eight outbuildings, said Ventura County Fire Department spokesman Tom Kruschke. One abandoned mobile home in Ventura County was among the structures destroyed.

By Thursday, the bill for fighting the blaze had reached \$7 million. The cause of the fire is still unknown.

Nine fires across the state were still less than 100 percent contained by Thursday afternoon, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

The Malibu Canyon fire, which destroyed or damaged 22 structures, is 100 percent contained. Costs for that fire had risen to \$5.2 million.

The Ventura County Fire Department has sent 14 engine companies and 21 other individuals to help with fires still burning around the state, department spokesman Bill Nash said.

The Oxnard Fire Department sent three engine companies to blazes including the Grass Valley fire near Lake Arrowhead, spokeswoman Deborah Shane said.

Other departments around the county sent a total of four engine companies to other fires.



© Ventura County Star