

## **Lightning-sparked fire reported northwest of Huntington Lake**

By Quinn Western

The Fresno Bee, Thurs., July 25, 2013

A lightning-sparked fire has burned an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 acres near Horsethief Creek northwest of Huntington Lake, a fire official said.

Sean Collins, public information officer for the South Central Sierra Incident Management Team, said the fire is in an inaccessible area on very steep and treacherous terrain ranging from 2,500 to 9,000 feet.

"There's a minimum amount of firefighters on this fire due to dangerous conditions," Collins said.

There are helicopters on the fire, but the amount of smoke and an inversion layer keeping it low is making it more difficult for the air resources, he said.

"Air resources can't fly all the time. It has to be a safe environment for them to fly," Collins said.

The fire, started Monday or Tuesday from lightning, is slowly traveling northeast toward Lookout Point, he said.

There have been no injuries, no structures threatened and no evacuations, Collins said.

Stump Springs Road is closed from Huntington Lake Road to Kaiser Pass Road, he said.

Six other lightning-caused fires have been reported in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

These fires are each less than a quarter acre and because they are in a remote area they aren't threatening property.

The Tent Meadow Fire is burning in a single tree in Kings Canyon National Park. The remaining five fires -- Silliman, Skagway, Cahoon, Dennison and Hockett fires -- are in Sequoia National Park, the park service said.

The Valley air district warned that smoke from the fires can cause serious health problems, including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke.

The smoke could affect the eastern parts of Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare and Kern counties, including the foothill and mountain areas, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Heather Heinks, the district's outreach and communication supervisor, said when the smoke settles in the evening hours it can find its way onto the Valley floor.

"If you can see or smell smoke in your area, you are more than likely being affected," Heinks said.

Heinks urged residents to go inside or leave the area if they see or smell smoke, and to keep a close eye on sensitive individuals.

## **Mountain wildfires prompt Valley health worries**

Central Valley Business Times, Wed., July 24, 2013

Lightning strikes have started many wildfires in the Sierra National Forest, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, and Sequoia National Forest that are sending smoke emissions to the San Joaquin Valley air basin, prompting local air officials to issue a health cautionary statement.

Currently, the Aspen Wildfire is burning in Fresno County and smoke from this and other fires may impact the eastern parts of Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare and Kern counties, including the foothill and mountain areas. In addition, eastern portions of the Valley floor may be affected during overnight hours, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The health caution is in place until the fire is extinguished.

"If you can see or smell smoke in your area, you are most likely being affected," says Samir Sheikh, the air district's director of air quality analysis. "If possible, stay inside to avoid breathing in the smoke."

Smoke from fires produces fine-particulate matter (PM2.5), which can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke. Where conditions warrant, people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure or heavy exertion, depending on their local conditions.

## **Air officials issue smoke health caution**

### **Mountain wildfires emissions impact east side of air basin**

Sierra Star, Wed., July 24, 2013

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The health caution is in place until the fire is extinguished. The air district will continue to monitor the impact these wildfires are having on air quality and update the media as warranted.

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Residents can check the nearest air monitor to their location to determine localized conditions. Visit the Real-time Air Advisory Network page on the District's website to subscribe for free: [http://www.valleyair.org/Programs/RAAN/raan\\_landing.htm](http://www.valleyair.org/Programs/RAAN/raan_landing.htm).

For more information about the air district, call a regional office in Fresno (559) 230-6000.

## **Lightning strikes pound the Sierra National Forest**

### **U.S. Forest Service firefighters battling 300-acre Aspen Fire**

Sierra Star, Wed., July 24, 2013

Since Sunday afternoon, July 21, the Sierra National Forest- High Sierra Ranger District has received significant lightning activity. These down-strikes have resulted in 15 new wildfires, the largest of which is the 300-acre Aspen Fire located below Stump Springs Road just north of Aspen Creek. Extreme fire behavior has been observed on the Aspen Fire, with spotting of over 600 feet ahead of the main fire. At one point late Tuesday afternoon, all crews were pulled off the fire line for safety reasons. The Aspen Fire has the potential to make large uphill runs and threaten the Stump Springs Road area. Sierra National Forest officials have ordered the Central Sierra Type 2 Incident Management Team for the incident (<http://scsierra.imtcenter.net/main/Index.aspx>). Of the additional lightning fires, three are in wilderness areas and two have been unable to be located by fire personnel, but are likely to show smoke again during the day Wednesday. All fires are less than ¼ acre. The fires are split between the Kings River drainage and the San Joaquin River drainage and occurred between 1,100 feet and approx. 9,400 feet in elevation. Four fires are already fully contained but will continue to be monitored. There are currently four 20-person fire crews assigned to the fires with

two additional crews on order. Three air tankers and four helicopters are also involved in suppression efforts. U.S. Forest Service smokejumpers have been deployed on some of the more remote fires. For additional fire information, please contact one of our Forest Service offices: High Sierra Ranger District (559) 855-5355, or Clovis (559) 297-0706.

## **Compost fire stays aflame**

By Brooke Borba

Patterson Irrigator, Wed., July 24, 2013

Fire crews battled a large fire that broke out on Saturday afternoon, July 20 at a compost company north of Patterson's rural region.

The fire was reported around 5 p.m. at Recology Grover Environmental Products, a compost, solid waste facility off Interstate 5 and Gaffery Road in Vernalis, according to Fire Division Chief Jeff Gregory of West Stanislaus County Fire Protection District.

The waste, mostly comprised of wood chips and leftover food scraps from restaurants, created a sudden internal combustion on Saturday afternoon, said Division Chief Gregory. He states the call lasted 6 hours, ending in a 5 acre long and 25-foot high pile of compost-fire, on Saturday alone.

Once the fire was confined, firefighters handed the reigns over to Recology, where the pile was kept under strict supervision by their staff. Recology workers have since been in the field, attempting to put out the flames throughout the week.

Local fire agencies have been making hourly trips to the site as of Tuesday. To Gregory's knowledge, much of the fire has been put out, but the smoke clouds have consumed the skies, drifting over Patterson's air quality.

Almost every staff member at Recology was out taming the flames and were unavailable for comments at that time.

"The company is still working to get the smoke taken care of," said Gregory on Monday, July 22.

According to Gregory, the fire was still burning on Monday, but not at a threatening pace. However, due to the wet compost, the company and local firefighters are finding it difficult to keep the smoke at bay, which is consuming the airways throughout Stanislaus and San Joaquin Valley.

"Our only concern is the smoke," said Gregory. "We have a little bit of overcast, which is keeping all the smoke in, instead of letting it out."

As a result, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District visited the compost location to provide an onsite investigation.

According to Jaime Holt, chief communications officer of the San Joaquin Valley APCD, the monitors have yet to indicate that anyone in either Vernalis or Patterson's communities were under any direct effect.

"We haven't seen any huge spikes in the air quality," said Holt at 3 p.m. Monday. "But we are working with the facility to keep the impact under control."

Despite their numbers, Holt remarked that five citizens within the Vernalis community called for their services. A number of Patterson residents have also provided their own insight about the impacts of the smoke, noting the smell and burning sensations they've received in their eyes.

Despite reassurances from the local fire department and the San Joaquin Valley APCD, many residents remained skeptical about the air quality.

By Tuesday, however, Chief Gregory stated that Recology had acquired a helicopter to dump water on the burning pile of wood chips, trimmings and restaurant waste.

"I would say the smoke is down by 40 percent," said Gregory on Tuesday at 10:12 a.m. "We have water trucks going, a helicopter and a crew determined to put this thing out. We are moving forward."

Gregory suspects the compost-fire will continue to burn for a couple more days before it will be fully extinguished.