

## Californians flee as strong winds push fire through canyons

By Christopher Weber Associated Press  
Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Powerful winds pushed flames through Southern California canyons early Thursday as an out-of-control wildfire burned near homes and forced residents to flee.

The blaze in Orange County's Silverado Canyon began late Wednesday as a house fire that quickly spread to tinder-dry brush as gusts topped 70 mph (113 kph).

It exploded in size throughout the night and as the sun came up, an enormous plume of smoke was visible for miles.

Firefighters struggled in steep terrain amid unpredictable Santa Ana winds that have raised fire danger for much of the region.

Orange County Fire Authority Captain Thanh Nguyen said crews were scrambling to stay ahead of flames that jumped major roads.

"We've seen the wind change also drastically, so that's what we're telling all our personnel to be aware of — that constantly changing wind," he told CBS LA TV.

Evacuations were ordered for several canyon neighborhoods near the city of Lake Forest and residents of other nearby areas were told to be ready to get out. It was not immediately known how many people were affected or if any homes were damaged.

Numerous studies have linked bigger wildfires in America to climate change from the burning of coal, oil and gas. Scientists have said climate change has made California much drier, meaning trees and other plants are more flammable.

The Bond Fire about 50 miles (80 kilometers) southeast of Los Angeles is burning near the same area of October's Silverado Fire, which forced tens of thousands of people to evacuate.

The new blaze broke out as Southern California utilities cut the power to tens of thousands of customers to avoid the threat of wildfires during the notorious Santa Anas.

Red flag warnings of extreme fire danger through Saturday were in place because of low humidity, bone-dry brush and the winds, which sweep down from the interior, the National Weather Service said.

Utilities in the populous region began cutting power Wednesday to customers as a precaution to prevent gusts from blowing tree limbs into electrical equipment or knocking down power lines, which have sparked devastating wildfires in recent years.

Southern California Edison cut power to about 15,000 homes and businesses by late Wednesday night and was considering de-energizing lines serving about 271,000 customers in seven counties throughout the windy period, which could last into Saturday.

It was one of the utility's largest precautionary blackouts.

San Diego Gas & Electric pulled the plug on about 24,000 customers by Wednesday night with another 73,000 in the crosshairs.

"We recognize losing power is disruptive, and we sincerely thank our customers for their patience and understanding," the utility said.

Evacuations were ordered when a small wildfire broke out near the rural community of Nuevo in Riverside County, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) to the east of the Bond Fire.

And to the south, small blaze in San Diego County threatened about 200 homes and prompted evacuations before firefighters managed to contain 50 percent of it. At least one structure was destroyed and six others were damaged, according to 10 News San Diego.

California already has experienced its worst-ever year for wildfires. More than 6,500 square miles (16,835 square kilometers) have been scorched, a total larger than the combined area of Connecticut and Rhode

Island. At least 31 people have been killed and 10,500 homes and other structures damaged or destroyed.

The latest fire threat comes as much of California plunges deeper into drought. Virtually all of Northern California is in severe or extreme drought while nearly all of Southern California is abnormally dry or worse.

## **Power goes out as fire danger looms in Southern California**

By Christopher Weber Associated Press  
Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Southern California utilities cut the power to tens of thousands of customers to avoid the threat of wildfires as the region found itself whipped by Santa Ana winds that could turn sparks into catastrophes.

Red flag warnings of extreme fire danger were in place Thursday throughout much of the region because of low humidity, bone-dry brush and the winds, which sweep down from the interior with sustained winds of up to 35 mph but gusts of 50 mph to 70 mph (112.7 kph) at times, the National Weather Service said.

The warnings are in place into Saturday, with the winds at their greatest overnight and in early morning hours, the weather service said.

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A blaze on roughly 15 acres in in San Diego County threatened about 200 homes and officials were working to evacuate them, said Capt. Thomas Shoots with Cal Fire, California's state firefighting agency. Nearby apartments were under evacuation advisories. The fire reported late Wednesday had damaged some homes, [KGTV reported](#).

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"Some years there's some rain that tamps down the fire season. But not yet this year," said meteorologist Adam Roser with the weather service in San Diego.

No rain is expected for Southern California for at least the next week and a half, he said.

Northern California, which has seen more precipitation this fall but not much recently, was expecting dry, windy weather starting this weekend.

## **District warns conditions not conducive to wood burning**

Hanford Sentinel, Tuesday, December 1, 2020

CENTRAL VALLEY — Local air officials are advising San Joaquin Valley residents that conditions are expected to remain cold, dry and stagnant throughout the week, causing PM2.5 (particulate matter pollution) emissions to accumulate, resulting in higher pollution concentrations throughout the Valley air basin, which includes the counties of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the Valley portion and the Frazier Park area of Kern.

Strong nighttime inversions and minimal winds this week trap pollutants on the Valley floor. “Stable conditions like those we are currently experiencing are one of the main challenges the San Joaquin Valley faces during the winter months,” said Samir Sheikh, Valley Air District Executive Director and Air Pollution Control Officer. “During times like this, residential wood smoke stays in your neighborhood, impacting your neighbors,” he added.

Residential wood burning is one of the Valley’s largest sources of wintertime PM 2.5 emissions and shown to have a direct effect on neighborhood air quality and public health. The District warns that adherence to the Check before You Burn Program is critical to prevent air pollution from reaching unhealthy levels and asks that residents avoid heating their homes by burning wood, if possible. Refraining from the use of any outdoor wood burning devices is also urged. This includes fire pits, outdoor fireplaces and chimeneas.

Exposure to PM 2.5 can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis, and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. Individuals with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors’ advice for dealing with episodes of PM exposure. Those with existing respiratory conditions, including COVID-19, young children and the elderly, are especially susceptible to the health effects from this form of pollution.

Check Before You Burn runs from Nov. 1 through the end of February every year, reducing PM 2.5 emissions from residential wood smoke. During that time, the District releases a daily, county-by-county wood burning declaration based on the air quality forecast. The three possible declarations are: *No Burning For All*, *No Burning Unless Registered* and *Burning Discouraged*. Individuals found burning when it is not allowed could receive a fine up to \$100 for first time violators.

Wood burning curtailments do not apply to natural gas devices. Residences in areas with no natural gas service or where wood burning is the sole source of heat are exempt. Areas where propane tanks are used are considered to be without natural gas service. Outdoor wood burning devices at all residences are still subject to daily restrictions, regardless of exemption status.

Daily burn information is available by visiting [checkbeforeyouburn.org](http://checkbeforeyouburn.org), by calling 1-800-SMOG INFO (766-4463), or by downloading the free “Valley Air” app on your mobile device.

Valley residents are encouraged to participate in the Burn Cleaner incentive program and receive as much as \$3,000 to upgrade from older, higher-polluting wood stoves and open-hearth fireplaces to EPA Certified wood, pellet or natural gas inserts and free-standing stoves. To participate in this program please visit [www.valleyair.org/burncleaner](http://www.valleyair.org/burncleaner).

**Note: The following clip in Spanish mentions the health caution issued for Kings and Kern counties due to the potential of blowing dust due to high winds.**

### **Emiten alerta por vientos de hasta 50 millas por hora y advierten de la mala calidad del aire**

**Expertos en meteorología advierten de fuertes vientos para regiones del Valle Central, los cuales tienen en alerta a las autoridades de salud y de emergencia debido al riesgo de incendios y a la mala calidad de aire.**

Univision 21, Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2020

BAKERSFIELD, California.- A partir del jueves y hasta el viernes, el Servicio de Meteorología en Hanford emitió una alerta por ráfagas de viento de hasta 50 millas por hora para sectores del sur y este del Valle, por lo que proyectan gran suspensión de polvo y concentraciones de material contaminante.

El Distrito de Calidad del Aire del Valle de San Joaquín advirtió que para las próximas 48 horas golpearán fuertes vientos la región de los condados de Kern y Kings, lo que provocará un empeoramiento en la calidad del aire.

La advertencia de salud es porque debido a las condiciones atmosféricas proyectadas levantarán concentraciones de material particulado de 10 micrones (PM10), por lo que piden que los residentes no se expongan al polvo en suspensión.

Para evitar que la calidad de aire se torne insalubre, entonces también solicitan no quemar leña residencial, ya que eso perjudicará los niveles contaminantes en el Valle de San Joaquín.

"Las condiciones de viento en áreas donde el suelo es excepcionalmente seco, se crean concentraciones poco saludables de (PM10), la que puede causar graves problemas de salud, agravar la enfermedad pulmonar, desencadenar ataques de asma, bronquitis y aumentar el riesgo de infecciones respiratorias" dice el comunicado de prensa del Distrito del Aire.

Los adultos mayores y los niños deben evitar la exposición prolongada o el esfuerzo intenso.