

River Fire near Colfax held to 2,600 acres

By Dominic Fracassa

San Francisco Chronicle, Friday, Aug. 6, 2021

Firefighters and favorable weather conditions kept the River Fire burning in Nevada and Placer counties to 2,600 acres overnight, with no growth reported early Friday morning.

Containment of the fire doubled over night, to 30%.

Fire officials said they were anticipating more intense fire activity Saturday, with higher temperatures and gusting winds in the weekend weather forecast.

The blaze injured three people Thursday, including one firefighter, and prompted Gov. Gavin Newsom to declare a state of emergency to accelerate aid to Nevada and Placer counties as well as to Siskiyou County, where the Antelope Fire has burned nearly 23,000 acres.

Nearly 100 structures have been damaged or destroyed and another 3,400 remained threatened.

It was still not clear what caused the blaze, which sparked Wednesday afternoon.

River Fire near Colfax destroys nearly 100 structures, sends thousands fleeing blaze in Gold Country

By Sarah Ravani, Emma Talley, Jill Tucker

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COLFAX, Placer County — A fast-moving wildfire roared through more than 2,600 acres of dry, dense vegetation near the town of Colfax, destroying or damaging nearly 100 structures within the first day and forcing thousands from their homes.

The blaze also injured three people, including one firefighter, and prompted Gov. Gavin Newsom to declare a state of emergency to ramp up aid to Nevada and Placer counties as well as to Siskiyou County, where the Antelope Fire has burned nearly 23,000 acres.

As of Thursday evening, firefighters had made some progress battling the River Fire, which was 15% contained, despite strong winds pushing the fire from Placer County and into Nevada County.

The fire started around 2 p.m. Wednesday north of Applegate, off Milk Ranch Road and the Bear River Campground, though the exact location where it began isn't yet clear.

More than 500 firefighters were fighting the blaze on Thursday, as well as nine bulldozers and other equipment. Despite the progress, fire crews planned to stay on scene overnight to continue mopping up hot spots and putting in contingency lines to stop the fire from growing.

"We are not 100% contained," said Robert Foxworthy, a spokesperson for Cal Fire. "There is always that chance that something could flare."

Foxworthy added, however, that he expects firefighters to continue gaining an upper hand on the blaze.

Most of the structures destroyed were in residential areas, officials said. The cause of the fire is unknown.

The River Fire was one of several blazes burning across a tinder-dry California, with a severe drought adding to fears that this year's fire season could create crisis conditions that rival previous record-setting years, including 2020, which saw nearly 10,000 fires burn more than 4 million acres.

North of the River River, the Dixie Fire in Butte County was still raging Thursday. It has already registered as the sixth largest and eighth most destructive fire in state history, burning 322,000 acres.

In the area of the River Fire, many evacuees remained uncertain about the status of their homes.

But Rick Hughes, 66, already knew.

On Thursday morning, he stood on the side of the road on Highway 174 near Shady Glen (Placer County), hoping to hitch a ride to a nearby general store to wait out the evacuation orders. He had narrowly escaped flames the day before at his tent campsite home of nine years along the Bear River.

Hughes realized the fire was a threat after a radio broadcast at about 3:30 p.m. warned the blaze was near the Bear River Campground.

Hughes said he packed up his essentials, made coffee, and took a seat near his backpack to wait. But with embers in the sky, he left and spent the night on a bridge about a mile away watching the smoke plume. When he went to check on his belongings the next morning, they were destroyed, the ground was still smoldering.

"The fire must have been nipping at my heels but it didn't get me," he said, his gray hair covered by a bandanna as he carried his possessions on his back. "I left, I lived, I'm happy."

At the Bear River Campground on Thursday, tents were abandoned along the river after what looked like a hurried evacuation. A cup of coffee remained on a stove at one site, and a stack of paper plates and a container of salt at another. Nearby, two buckets filled with toy cars and a track pieces were next to a small white and gray tent.

An estimated 5,200 people were evacuated from parts of Nevada and Placer counties with half of threatened properties in the city of Colfax, home to about 2,000 people. Officials said they didn't expect to reopen any areas Thursday.

Sisters Theresa Goodwin, 65, and Anna Nielsen, 66, had evacuated from their home in Chicago Park (Nevada County), but returned Thursday morning to check on their restaurant, the Happy Apple Kitchen, and their farm across the street.

Though they had never evacuated before, they had go-bags ready. When police officers arrived to urge people to leave, Goodwin grabbed her mother-in-law's ashes, her daughter's wedding dress and her great-grandmother's handwoven quilt, but forgot important documents.

"All you could see was great big black smoke, and we could see tall flames shooting up," Goodwin said. "We saw firewood shoot up and land over in this field. It almost looked like a tornado cloud."

The pair planned to head to Grass Valley (Nevada County) later Thursday to wait out the fire at a relative's home.

In Grass Valley, dozens of evacuees gathered at Bear River High School, where cots and Red Cross food lines were set up just days before the scheduled start of the school year.

Red Cross officials said anyone entering the shelter would be screened for the coronavirus and required to wear masks. Rapid coronavirus tests and hotel rooms were made available for those with symptoms. With the delta variant raging, it's a particularly difficult time for evacuees.

Isabella Vittoni and James Vaughn were among the dozens who spent the night in the parking lot, rather than on shelter cots. They left their Colfax home near Bear River just after 3 p.m. Wednesday, before the mandatory evacuation arrived.

"There was full-on panic, adrenaline, everyone's sweating, trying to get whatever you can," Vittoni said. "We thought we'd rather just have stuff down here than wait till the last minute and be screwed with the road coming in and out."

But they weren't alone. They were joined by trucks, campers, boats, RVs and other vehicles fleeing the area.

"People were driving dirt bikes and quads down the road just to get out," Vittoni said

Vittoni and Vaughn struggled to leave their Colfax home with six horses, a pig, a sheep, some chickens, three cats and three dogs. But neighbors came to help get the big animals to the Nevada County Fairground and ferry the others to emergency boarding or to family friends.

For Lizz Porter, the threat was over.

Her dream home was gone, reduced to ashes as the fire edged its way up Bear River. She and her husband had moved to Colfax almost exactly a year ago, leaving the Bay Area during the pandemic, saying they no longer wanted to wait for "someday" to have a big house with 4 acres and a gorgeous view of a river.

They evacuated Wednesday afternoon and found out Thursday morning their home was gone, including the kitchen table her parents had when she was a child, her husband's vinyl record collection and her 500-pound laser engraver, which was key to her livelihood of making jewelry, home decor and other items.

Her father has started a GoFundMe account to help the family recover and rebuild.

She said she hadn't really cried about the loss until a friend posted a message on social media about how Porter was now homeless. The word hit her hard.

"I'm pretty sure I'm in shock, but we're hanging in there," said Porter, noting that she hasn't had great luck in life and is awaiting a kidney transplant.

"I know that God doesn't give me more than I can handle, but I just wish he didn't trust me so much," she said with a laugh. "We'll get through it."

Dixie Fire grows 100,000 acres in 24 hours, becoming third largest in Calif.

History

By Amy Graff

SFGATE, Friday, August 6, 2021

California's largest wildfire this year grew more than 100,000 acres in 24 hours, with its total burn area increasing from 322,502 acres Thursday to 432,813 acres Friday morning, making it the third largest b The blaze located about 280 miles northeast of San Francisco remained active Thursday and overnight advancing north into Lassen National Park and pushing onto the eastern shore of Lake Almanor.

Flames tore through Canyon Dam, a hamlet with a population of about three dozen people located near the dam that forms Lake Almanor. It's 13 miles north of Greenville, the historic mining town that was ravaged by flames the day before. Businesses and homes were destroyed in Canyon Dam amid fierce winds fanning flames.

"We're seeing truly frightening fire behavior and I don't know how to overstate that," Chris Carlton, the supervisor for Plumas National Forest said in a recent briefing. "We have a lot of veteran firefighters who have observed for 20 years and have never seen conditions like this especially day after day. We really are in uncharted territory."

Preliminary reports Thursday evening indicated the community of Chester was mostly saved from flames.

As of 7 p.m. Thursday, a few structures outside the town were damaged or destroyed and only one building within the town was damaged, Mike Wink, operations section chief for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, said at an operations meeting.

Journalist Craig Philpott shared an image Friday of a barn in Chester that remained untouched by flames.

"Good morning Chester CA history lives on and the Olsen Barn still stands," Philpott wrote.

laze in state history.

Started near Cresta Dam in the Feather River Canyon on July 14, the Dixie Fire has destroyed at least 91 houses and other buildings, according to Cal Fire, and torched a bone-dry landscape and triggered thousands of evacuations in a region still recovering from the 2018 Camp Fire, California's deadliest blaze. Nearly 5,000 personnel are fighting the blaze. PG&E has said its equipment may have started it.

There were no signs of California's Dixie Fire slowing down Thursday amid gusty winds and bone-dry conditions.

"It has the potential for getting bad before getting better," said Mitch Matlow, a spokesperson with the multi-agency team managing the fire.

The fire was active Thursday on its north and east edge, and fire activity is expected to pick up through the day as a weather system drops down from the north and kicks up winds, said Matlow.

"As the cold front passes over we're going to see very erratic wind behavior," he said. "We have expectations that we'll have winds in all directions over the fire today."

The unstoppable monster exploded Wednesday afternoon amid extreme weather conditions with winds up to 40 mph and humidity levels as low as 6%.

"Single digit humidity ... that's really not good with these winds ... that's bad," said Craig Clements, director of San Jose State University's Fire Weather Research Laboratory and a professor at the university. "This is looking crazy."

Flames engulfed the small mountain town of Greenville Wednesday night, leveling much of the historic Main Street and scorching surrounding homes.

"Yesterday we saw extreme fire growth," Matlow said Thursday. "The fire was averaging about a half-mile an hour."

Plumas County Sheriff Todd Johns said Thursday evening that his "heart is crushed" by the devastation in Greenville, a small California community with at least 100 homes that have been largely destroyed by the Dixie Fire.

A lifelong resident of Greenville, Johns said at a press broadcast community meeting, "All I can tell you is, I'm sorry."

He said there were no injuries reported in Greenville though there are four people who are unaccounted for.

He also asked the public to give donations of new or lightly used clothing, pet supplies, bottled water, school supplies, gift cards and new toiletries to the Mormon Church for community collection.

"The fire is not over," he said in closing. "What am I telling folks at this time is that if the plume is anywhere near your direction, stay miles away from it."

Incident Commander Rocky Opliger said on Wednesday as the fire advanced toward Greenville, emergency responders did an incredible job rescuing community members who did not leave.

"They spent a big part of their time just doing those rescues as the fire came in there with significant velocity," Opliger said.

Wildfire photographer Stuart Palley shared harrowing images from the wiped-out town on social media.

"The fire burned through town so hot that when structures burned it melted the metal street lamp posts," wrote Palley, sharing an image of one of the melted posts.

Palley wrote in another post that the majority of downtown Greenville is completely destroyed.

"All I see standing on the main st. Is a dollar general," he added. "My heart is broken for this beautiful little town."

The fire has been pumping out massive pyrocumulonimbus clouds since it first sparked in July.

"I can tell you conditions are ripe right now for pyrocumulonimbus cloud development," said Matlow. "I'm looking out my window at one right now, which is very large."

These massive, mushroom-shaped clouds of hot, smoky air towering thousands of feet into the sky are caused by a natural source of heat such as wildfires, according to NASA. Rising warm air from the fire carries water vapor, ash and smoke up into the atmosphere, forming clouds.

These clouds can become so intense that they create their own weather and emit lightning that can start new wildfires on the ground.

Wildfire updates: Dixie Fire 3rd largest in California history, sends smoke to Sacramento

By Amelia Davidson and Michael McGough

Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee & other papers, Friday, Aug. 6, 2021

Crews could not contain the Dixie Fire heading into Friday as it expanded 110,000 acres under red flag weather conditions, becoming California's third largest wildfire of all time.

Although the red flag warning lifted Thursday night and weather conditions are expected to improve Friday, officials have yet to see an end in sight as the blaze continues to threaten numerous towns in Plumas County and spews smoke into the Sacramento Valley.

“We’re starting on a bit of a more moderate weather cycle, but it’s relative,” said fire behavior analyst John Cook in a Friday morning incident briefing. “I mean moderate compared to what it did a couple days ago? That was crazy. The pressure is not off ... this fire is not over.”

In its morning incident report, the state fire agency said the fire encompassed 432,813 acres (676 square miles) — an area 14 times the size of the city of San Francisco. The fire has nearly doubled in size since Sunday and containment has remained stagnant at 35% through the week.

High winds that began Wednesday afternoon propelled the fire’s rapid expansion through the last 48 hours. On Wednesday, the fire entered the town of Greenville and burned nearly every structure in the town’s main area to the ground. On Thursday evening, it did the same to Canyon Dam, a smaller town to the northwest of Greenville.

The towns of Chester, Westwood and the Lake Almanor peninsula have faced similar threats as the fire expanded to the north, up past Lake Almanor. “If you are still in the area, you are in danger and you MUST leave now!” wrote the Plumas County Sheriff’s Office in a social media post midday Thursday, regarding the small towns.

Just over 5,000 firefighters are battling the fire, which ignited three weeks ago above the Cresta Dam in Feather River Canyon in the burn scar of the deadly 2018 Camp Creek fire. Officially, the fire’s cause remains under investigation, but Pacific Gas and Electric Co. disclosed shortly after the fire began that its equipment may have played a role in the wildfire’s ignition.

Evacuation orders and warning are in place in Butte, Plumas, Tehama and Lassen counties. A full list of evacuations spanned eight pages of Cal Fire’s Friday incident report.

The fire has destroyed 143 structures, more than doubling its destruction from the beginning of the week. Cal Fire estimated Friday morning that over 13,871 structures remain threatened by the fires.

Although wind levels have relaxed at the Dixie Fire, higher atmosphere winds are expected to push smoke into the Sacramento area Friday. In a Thursday news release, the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District warned residents that smoke would enter the area Friday and remain through Sunday, raising the AQI to dangerous levels.

“Northerly and northwesterly winds will transport smoke from the fire complexes in northwestern California into the Sacramento region,” read the news release. “While a wind shift Saturday night may provide some relief, the clean-out will be slow and better air quality is not expected until Sunday afternoon.”

Although AQI levels remained in the healthy range as of 8 a.m. Friday, smoke was visible in much of the Sacramento area, creating a hazy morning and painting the sun a red shade. Air quality conditions are expected to deteriorate throughout the day.

RIVER FIRE

Crews have managed good progress on the River Fire, which started Wednesday afternoon near Colfax and grew explosively in its early hours before conditions calmed Thursday.

Cal Fire on Friday reported containment at 30%, up from 15% the previous evening, with minimal growth to a total of 2,600 acres.

The fire has destroyed at least 88 structures, most of them homes, and continues to threaten another 3,400, Cal Fire’s Nevada-Yuba-Placer unit said in a Friday morning incident report. Damage assessment teams are still working to examine the extent of destruction.

Evacuation orders remain in place for the city of Colfax west of Interstate 80, near Mount Olive and other nearby areas. Detailed evacuation information is provided by the Placer County Sheriff’s Office and Nevada County Office of Emergency Services.

Two civilians and one firefighter have been injured in the blaze. No fatalities have been reported.

More than 1,300 fire personnel are assigned to the incident.

The fire sent up a massive plume of smoke Wednesday that could be seen from Sacramento. Activity died down considerably Thursday, though fire crews stayed on high alert as gusty winds remained in the forecast.

Evacuation centers remain set up at Regional Park gymnasium in Auburn, and at Bear River High School in Grass Valley. Animal evacuation centers are at the Placer County Animal Services Center in Auburn and the Nevada County Fairgrounds in Grass Valley.

The cause of the River Fire remains undetermined.

ANTELOPE FIRE

Another lightning-ignited wildfire, the Antelope Fire near the Antelope Creek drainage in Siskiyou County, erupted to nearly 22,605 acres this week amid "extreme" fire conditions including heavy wind gusts. There is no containment.

The Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office has evacuation orders in place for: Tennant, Bray, Mount Hebron, and Round Valley area south of Red Rock Road, including Long Prairie Road, Robison Road and Old State Highway.

The Antelope Fire started Sunday. Nearly 400 fire personnel are assigned.

SHASTA-TRINITY JULY LIGHTNING COMPLEX

A pair of large, lightning-sparked wildfires continue to burn at Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

The McFarland Fire near Wildwood south of Highway 36 grew to 24,247 acres and was 7% contained as of a Thursday evening update from the U.S. Forest Service. Evacuation orders remain in place for Wildwood residents, and Highway 36 is closed in the area.

The Forest Service said fire behavior was moderate Thursday but that "forecasted stronger winds (were) just starting to impact the fire area and could increase the rates of spread."

The Monument Fire is reported at 24,719 acres with no containment. It is burning west of Big Bar, threatening that community as well as Del Loma, Big Flat and Cedar Flat, all of which have mandatory evacuation warnings in place.

Big Flat evacuees may go to the Red Cross Shelter in Weaverville, on Main Street.

The Forest Service in a situation report said the fire is burning timber, grass and brush "that is extremely dry due to drought conditions," and that firefighting resources are limited due to other major wildfires burning in Northern California.

Both the McFarland and Monument fires sparked in late July during a lightning storm, Forest Service officials say.

Dixie Fire grows to 361,000 acres after wiping out much of Greenville in Plumas County

By Dustin Gardiner, Rachel Swan, Kurtis Alexander
San Francisco Chronicle, Thursday, August 5, 2021

GREENVILLE, Plumas County — Almost no structures are left standing in the center of town, except for a Dollar General store, a bank and a small supermarket. The Dixie Fire laid waste to the historic Gold Rush town and then moved on with ferocious speed.

Among the ashen remains: a general store built around 1881, the collapsed brick facade of a Masonic lodge and the fallen sign of the former Pioneer Cafe.

Residents of this region had barely grasped the heartbreaking devastation when sheriffs ordered thousands more in nearby communities to flee from what is now California's sixth largest recorded wildfire at 361,812 acres.

People in Taylorsville were ordered to drive south on Highway 89, or east via Beckwourth-Gennessee Road, to a shelter in Portola. In Lassen County, a shelter opened at Lassen Union High School in Susanville. Campgrounds filled, and RV parks offered rates of \$40 a night.

For some, evacuation orders meant an anguished debate. The last holdouts weighed whether to stay or go.

"This town, I knew like the back of my hand. Not anymore," Mark Vaughn, 61, said Thursday, sitting in a lawn chair outside his blue mobile home a half mile west along highway 89. He was among the few residents on the outskirts of Greenville who couldn't bear to leave when the town was evacuated Monday.

The blaze engulfed Greenville Wednesday night, all but destroying the community of 2,100 residents.

"It's a dead town now," Vaughn said. "I guarantee that."

The fire razed at least 45 buildings. It created a pyrocumulus cloud that quickly expanded and grew darker, "proof of the extreme conditions and fire activity on the ground," a tweet from the Butte County Fire Department said Thursday afternoon.

Although the fire was 35% contained Thursday, firefighters were still struggling to get the upper hand, and the changing wind patterns caused new fears. The blaze had erupted Wednesday night, when gusts buffeted flames over control lines in Round Valley, according to a Cal Fire report Thursday morning.

California has grown accustomed to such devastation, but on Thursday, Cal Fire announced grim new statistics: Six of the state's seven biggest wildfires have occurred within the past year. The state has seen an "astounding" 151% increase in acres burned, compared with this time last year, the agency said.

Greenville, a town sustained by logging, cattle ranching and Christmas tree farms, has been the most significant loss to date. Evacuated early in the week, by Thursday it was a vast field of rubble, gutted buildings, downed light poles and scorched trees, with spot fires flickering in the wreckage. Flames tore through the Sierra Lodge Hotel, a pizzeria, a bakery, and the Way Station, which recently opened as a bar and restaurant.

Vaughn, who defied evacuation warnings, drove into town Thursday morning to assess the damage and wept as he struggled to recognize the torched brick remains of old buildings that once lined the main drag.

Melted streetlamps dangled over glass-covered sidewalks. Firefighters on bulldozers spent the morning clearing arterial streets of debris, as the walls of burned-out buildings occasionally collapsed nearby and foundations smoldered.

The night before, Vaughn, a disabled retiree, had fought desperately to save his home from a wall of soaring flames that came within several yards of his gravel driveway. He hoisted buckets of water from his above-ground pool to hold back the flames until a fire crew arrived in the wee hours.

Nearby, he could see that the home of one of his daughters had burned to the ground. Vaughn's wife, Martha, evacuated days earlier with the couple's horses, but he stayed behind to protect their trailer and chickens.

Other residents in nearby towns faced the same agonizing choice Thursday, with the Dixie Fire still growing. Among them was Kevin Bartlett, 37, a disabled former truck driver who lives in Canyon Dam, about 9 miles along Highway 89, where fire crews were stationed.

Bartlett filled his white Chevy pickup truck with clothing, family heirlooms and urns holding the ashes of lost family pets. In the bed of the truck, his two goats were loaded into metal crates. His dogs anxiously barked from inside the house.

"When I see flames coming from any direction, I'll throw them in and go," he said, looking at the sky filled with orange smoke. "I hope it doesn't come to that, but this sky is telling me something different."

In recent decades Greenville's economic fortunes had dipped. Unlike the areas around Lake Almanor to the north and Graeagle to the south, the community hadn't drawn the needed tourist traffic to shore itself up.

“It was a very vibrant town up until the early '90s, until the timber industry took a dive,” said Scott Lawson, former director of the Plumas County Museum and a fifth-generation resident of the county. “People used to kid about Greenville, because it had fallen on hard times, but the wealth of historical homes and buildings is amazing.”

Flames gnawed through the Greenville Cy Hall Memorial Museum — named for a longtime Greenville businessman and fire chief — which had been a rallying point for people in town who had been working to revive the two-story wooden warehouse and hold public events there.

“The merchants kept trying to revitalize the place,” Lawson said. “They had a good sense of community. Now I don’t know what you do.”

Much of the original downtown, which was built after pioneers rushed to the area for gold in the 1850s, was destroyed in a fire in 1880. However, some of the old brick and masonry buildings survived the blaze and were still standing, at least until the Dixie Fire came through.

Dry winds prompted a red flag warning that was to remain in place until 8 p.m. Thursday, according to Cal Fire. Officials said they would concentrate on holding fire lines and containing the perimeter on the wildfire’s north side.

On Wednesday night, the Dixie Fire also reached the western edge of Chester, 19 miles to the northwest of Greenville, where it confronted a robust “defense operation,” according to Capt. Tony McHale of the Ventura County Fire Department, which is providing aid to Cal Fire.

McHale said the crew of men and women has so far managed to defend Chester against the encroaching fire, but that the situation is dynamic. Winds were expected to shift from southwesterly to a northwesterly direction Thursday, lashing a tinder-dry landscape that McHale compared to a month-old Christmas tree being torched.

As of Thursday afternoon, the Dixie Fire burned in Plumas, Butte, Lassen and Tehama counties, bringing mandatory evacuations in Plumas County from Meadow Valley at the south to the Lassen County border, east to Lone Rock and west to Deer Creek Highway in Butte County.

In Lassen County, the sheriff ordered evacuations in the Clear Creek, Westwood and Pine Town areas south of Highway 36; south of Highway 44 including Silver Lake, Juniper Lake and the Caribou Wilderness; and south of Mountain Meadows Reservoir from Hamilton Branch waterway to the Plumas county line.

The Lassen County Health and Social Services Department announced the opening of two emergency evacuation shelters in Susanville and a shelter for pets at the Lassen County Fairgrounds.

Air quality officials urge locals to stay indoors due to smoke from Dixie and River fires

By Zaeem Shaikh

Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee and other papers, Thursday, Aug. 5, 2021

Poor air quality levels are expected to persist and possibly reach hazardous levels in counties where the Dixie and River fires are burning, officials said Thursday.

The Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District and public health departments for Nevada, Plumas and Sierras counties said Thursday it was extending a joint air quality health advisory due to the prolonged and widespread smoke from wildfires. Air quality managers said a change in wind direction over the next two days will bring widespread smoke impacts throughout the three counties.

The Placer County Public Health Department and the Placer County Air Pollution Control District also issued an air quality advisory because of the potential for wildfire smoke impacts from the River Fire. Officials advised residents to be prepared for poor air quality through Sunday.

As of noon Thursday, the air quality index reading in Chester, located in Plumas County, was at 268, which is very unhealthy. Quincy had an AQI reading of 38.

Cities near the River Fire also dealt with air pollution. Grass Valley had an AQI reading of 51; Colfax was relatively clear with an AQI of 18.

Shifting winds are expected to also push the smoke south through the Central Valley and eventually into the Sacramento area, the National Weather Service said in a post. The AQI in Sacramento was 50 at noon Thursday but was expected to increase by Friday afternoon.

Exposures to elevated particulate matter 2.5 concentrations can lead to eye and throat irritation, headaches, nausea, shortness of breath, coughing and impaired lung function and chest pain. People with heart disease, respiratory conditions or chronic health issues are advised to stay indoors.

Officials recommend people minimize outdoor activities and run the air conditioner on the “recirculating” setting if that’s an option.