

## **UPDATE: Wildfire near Balch Park prompts evacuation warning, sends smoke toward Valley floor**

By Lauren Jennings

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### **Tuesday afternoon**

Firefighters are still working to douse the Wishon Fire burning near the Tule River Canyon in Sequoia National Forest.

The fire sparked around 2:40 p.m. Monday afternoon.

So far, the blaze has remained around 350 acres in size and is around 5% contained. It's unclear, however, what the actual acreage is because updates are often delayed by hours.

Highway 190 is now open to residents living between Rio Vista Drive and the PG&E powerhouse near Wishon.

Firefighters have been dealing with extreme heat while battling flames, with temperatures topping 105 Tuesday afternoon and expected to last through the weekend.

Not only that, but scattered showers and thunderstorms hit the Sierra Nevada Mountains Tuesday afternoon and evening, according to the National Weather Service in Hanford. The risk of lightning-caused fires grows as storms roll in.

Meanwhile, wildfire smoke has continued to make its way toward areas throughout Tulare County. Wildfire smoke contains particulate matter, which can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Air quality officials warned residents who may be impacted by smoke to consider staying indoors to reduce their exposure.

"Folks need to keep in mind, if they can smell smoke and see ash," Cassandra Melching with San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said, "then that is an indication that they are being affected by poor air quality and should take the necessary steps to limit their exposure."

To view Visalia's current air quality, [click here](#).

### **Tuesday morning**

The Wishon Fire grew from around 300 acres to around 350 acres last night and is around 5% contained as of Tuesday morning.

The latest update from fire officials, however, is seven hours old.

The USDA Forest Service, Cal Fire and Tulare County deputies and firefighters have responded to the fire, according to an update from Inciweb, including nine engines, seven hand crews, five helicopters and six air tankers.

According to the latest update from the National Interagency Fire Center, around 260 personnel are involved in the response.

No injuries have been reported.

Highway 190 remains closed to all traffic starting at Rio Vista Drive, above Springville, to the PG&E powerhouse near Wishon due to "fire suppression activity taking place from the highway."

Power remains out east of Balch Park in the communities of Doyle Springs, Camp Nelson, Pierpoint and Ponderosa. SCE's website, updated at 7:40 a.m. Tuesday, does not have an estimated time of repair yet.

The area has dozens of cabins which could be threatened if the fire spreads with Tuesday's high of 105.

Forecasters warned Tuesday that a large swath of California's interior will experience dangerously high temperatures.

The heat spell will largely impact the Central Valley but will also extend out to interior portions of the north and east San Francisco Bay regions and to the coast south of Monterey Bay, the National Weather Service said.

### **Monday night**

A brush fire east of Springville prompted road closures east of Highway 190 between Balch Park Road and Mahogany Flat on Monday.

The fire has tripled in size in three hours. It's now 300 acres and spreading.

Only westbound traffic is able to pass through, according to an update on California Highway Patrol's website.

The fire, SQF Wishon Fire, is spreading toward Camp Nelson as of Monday night, according to an update from Inciweb.

"All power has been lost above Camp Nelson from Rio Vista to Ponderosa," said Ashley Ritchie, a Tulare County Sheriff's Department spokesperson.

Sheriff Mike Boudreaux has issued an evacuation warning for the following areas:

All points along Wishon Drive north of Highway 190, including Camp Wishon and the community of Doyle Springs.

"If you live in this area, be prepared to leave," Boudreaux said. "Those who require additional time to evacuate, or those who have pets and livestock, should leave."

The CHP incident website states the fire was reported around 2:30 p.m. on Monday and was located "next to [a] powerline."

Doyle Springs, Camp Nelson, Pierpoint and Ponderosa are also without power at this time.

The cause of the fire is currently under investigation, according to Cal Fire.