

Electra Fire in Amador County explodes to over 3,000 acres overnight, threatens 'critical power infrastructure'

By Jordan Parker

San Francisco Chronicle, Tuesday July 5, 2022

The [Electra Fire](#) burning southeast of Jackson in Amador County grew to over 3,000 acres overnight, Cal Fire officials said Tuesday morning.

The fast-growing [wildfire](#), which sparked Monday near Box Beach, was still at 0% containment, while threatening 450 structures. The fire was measured at over 900 acres Monday night, with Cal Fire noting, the blaze was growing "at a dangerous rate of speed."

Cal Fire said Wednesday that there was a continued threat to critical power infrastructure and added that steep, rugged terrain is making it difficult for fire crews to access the South Fork of the Mokelumne River drainage.

Residents in Amador County and in the Butte Mountain Road area were under mandatory evacuation according to the Amador County Sheriff's Office. A mandatory evacuation for all residents within a 2-mile radius around Lake Tabeaud was issued by Cal Fire as well.

About 100 people were safely [evacuated from a Pacific Gas and Electric Co. facility](#) Monday after taking shelter from the rapidly growing fire, according to Amador County Sheriff Gary Redman.

A PG&E spokesperson said about 15,000 people were without power in Amador and Calaveras counties as a result of the fire. The utility also has a "number of assets potentially at risk," the spokesperson said.

The Amador County Sheriff's Office didn't immediately respond to inquiries on how many people had been evacuated as of Tuesday morning.

Caltrans said that State Road 26 was closed, both eastbound and westbound, from Buckeye Lane to Lower Dorray Road.

One first responder was injured fighting the blaze. The cause of the fire remained under investigation Tuesday, according to Cal Fire.

Follow the fire's size and movement with [The Chronicle's California Fire Map and Tracker](#).

Electra Fire in Amador County: About 100 people evacuated after sheltering in PG&E facility as wildfire exploded to 1,000 acres

By Trisha Thadani, Kate Galbraith

San Francisco Chronicle, Tuesday July 5, 2022

UPDATE: [Electra Fire explodes to over 3,000 acres overnight](#)

About 100 people who were forced to take shelter in a [Pacific Gas and Electric Co.](#) facility in Amador County on Monday as a [wildfire](#) rapidly grew have been safely evacuated, the Amador County Sheriff's Office said.

"They're all out safely," Amador County Sheriff Gary Redman told The Chronicle around 10:40 p.m. Monday.

As the Electra Fire erupted near Vox Beach, dozens of Fourth of July beachgoers suddenly found themselves contending with the rapidly growing wildfire, Redman said earlier.

Emergency responders were able to evacuate them to a nearby PG&E powerhouse — a facility on the North Fork Mokelumne River. They were safe there but stuck due to fire and fallen trees on nearby roadways until the sheriff's office escorted them out.

Cal Fire said the blaze was growing "at a dangerous rate of speed" Monday afternoon, measuring 959 acres by evening. Redman said earlier Monday that potentially 500 structures — mostly homes — were threatened by flames.

Karly Hernandez, a spokesperson for PG&E, said the company provided drinking water and shelter to those stuck inside.

Separately, [PG&E said that over 13,000 customers in Amador County were without power](#), and the utility de-energized some power lines at the request of Cal Fire to help firefighters stay safe.

Evacuations were ordered Monday evening in Amador County, and all residents in the Butte Mountain Road area were under a mandatory evacuation order, according to the Amador County Sheriff's Office. The road was closed except for those leaving the area.

Cal Fire also issued a mandatory evacuation for all residents within a 2-mile radius around Lake Tabeaud.

[Caltrans said](#) that State Road 26 was closed, both eastbound and westbound, from Buckeye Lane to Lower Dorray Road.

The fire appeared to form a pyrocumulous cloud, according to a photo shared by Cal Fire, a cloud that forms over searingly hot events like wildfires and volcanoes.

"This fire is showing some shallow plume-dominated behavior (somewhat unusual for location/time of year) due to combination of intense burning amid extremely dry 100/1000hr fuels and a fairly moist/unstable overlying atmosphere," climate and weather expert [Daniel Swain tweeted](#) Monday night.

The Italian Picnic Grounds, at 581 Highway 49 in Sutter Creek, was serving as an evacuation center. Another evacuation center is at San Andreas Town Hall, 24 Church Hill Road in San Andreas, [the Red Cross said](#). Residents with large and small animals may bring them to the Amador County Fairgrounds, the Sheriff's Department said.

California forest fire temporarily strands July 4th revelers

By AP

Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, July 5, 2022

Fourth of July revelers stranded by a wildfire in a mountainous California region that's a top tourist destination have safely evacuated, but the fire is still chewing through forests

JACKSON, Calif. (AP) — A Fourth of July wildfire that authorities say may have been sparked by fireworks or a barbecue temporarily trapped holiday revelers as it chewed through a mountainous California region that's a top tourism destination, officials said.

The Electra Fire in Sierra Nevada Gold Country broke out Monday afternoon and tripled in size overnight to more than 4.7 square miles (12.2 square kilometers) acres by Tuesday morning.

The fire started at a recreation area that was packed with people, forcing 85 to 100 celebrating the holiday at a river to take shelter at Pacific Gas & Electric Co. facility, said Amador County Sheriff Gary Redman. All were later safely evacuated, he said.

Mandatory evacuation orders and warnings combined affected about 500 people in Amador County and 300 to 400 people in Calaveras County, Redman said.

Redman said the cause of the fire was not known, but that it started in the Vox Beach area of the North Fork Mokelumne River. He said that could suggest fireworks or a barbecue as a potential cause.

One firefighter from the local fire protection district suffered burn injuries, Redman said.

Vox Beach is about 55 miles (89 kilometers) east of Sacramento in the heart of the Sierra Nevada region that is steeped with the history of the mid-1800s Gold Rush.

Several other small fires were burning in the state.

Live updates: Electra Fire grows to 3,000 acres after forcing evacuations, rescues

By Amelia Davidson and Brianna Taylor

Sacramento Bee, Modesto Bee, Fresno Bee, Tuesday, July 05, 2022

10:02 a.m.

Tuesday AirNow reported air quality in Sacramento was “good” in both ozone and particulate matter Tuesday morning. The air quality index was at 13, with ozone as the primary pollutant. It’s forecast to worsen throughout the day and week as temperatures rise.

Moderate to unhealthy air quality is reported in Jackson, Sutter Creek, Mokelumne Hill, Angels Camp, Murphys, Amador City and more, according to AirNow’s California fire and smoke map.

Near Jackson, the air quality index was 171 as of 9 a.m., according to the map. Particulate matter is the primary pollutant.

Moderate air quality means most people can open windows or go outside if they don’t “see or smell smoke,” while unhealthy air quality levels suggest people should keep “outdoor activities light and short” and go indoors if symptoms develop, according to AirNow.

7:55 a.m. Tuesday

The Electra Fire, which ignited Monday afternoon along the Amador-Calaveras county line, increased threefold overnight as crews struggled to contain the blaze.

Officials were able to safely evacuate around 100 residents who were stranded in a PG&E powerhouse Monday evening. The evacuees were moved to the powerhouse from a nearby beach when the fire ignited, Amador County Sheriff Gary Redman said Tuesday.

In a Tuesday morning update, the fire stood at 3,034 acres, up from 959 Monday night. It was 0% contained, and 450 structures were threatened, Cal Fire said.

But the blaze, which is burning in mountainous terrain 5 miles southeast of Jackson and 50 miles southeast of Sacramento, appeared to be moving away from populated areas Tuesday morning. It burned in a canyon next to the north fork of the Mokelumne River overnight, Redman said, and officials expect that if it remains below the ridge line on either side of the river, it will stay away from homes.

“The fire wasn’t real active last night, which is good,” Redman said. “It’s still in that canyon area, and as long as it stays there, that will keep it out of the neighborhoods.”

Redman added that the weather is expected to work in crews’ favor through the day, as wind is light and humidity is going to increase.

Evacuation orders remain in place for the Butte Mountain Road and Lake Tabeaud areas, as well as areas of Calaveras County north of Highway 26 from Montgomery Drive to Lower Dorrway Road. No new orders were issued overnight.

Evacuation shelters are set up at the Italian Picnic Grounds, 581 Highway 49 in Sutter Creek and at San Andreas Town Hall, 24 Church Hill Road. Large animals can be brought to the Amador County Fairgrounds.

Over 13,000 residents in the Jackson area are without power, Pacific Gas & Electric Co. reported on social media Monday night, as line in the area of the blaze were deenergized “for firefighter safety.” The fire is threatening “critical power infrastructure,” Cal Fire wrote in its Tuesday morning update, including the Electra Powerhouse from which residents were evacuated Monday night. The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

Electra Fire update: Here’s air quality conditions as wildfire burns southeast of Sacramento

By Brianna Taylor

Sacramento Bee, Modesto Bee, Fresno Bee, Tuesday, July 05, 2022

The Electra Fire, which sparked Monday along the Amador and Calaveras county line southeast of Sacramento, has disrupted the air quality in several areas in the region. But right now, it hasn’t hurt Sacramento.

AirNow reports air quality in the capital city as “good” in both ozone and particulate matter. Tuesday morning, the air quality index was at 13, with ozone as the primary pollutant. It’s forecast to worsen throughout the day and week as temperatures rise.

At 0% containment by Tuesday morning, the fire is at more than 3,000 acres. Moderate to unhealthy air quality is reported in Jackson, Sutter Creek, Mokelumne Hill, Angels Camp, Murphys, Amador City and more, according to AirNow’s California fire and smoke map.

Near Jackson, the air quality index was 171 as of 9 a.m., according to the map. Particulate matter is the primary pollutant.

Moderate air quality means most people can open windows or go outside if they don’t “see or smell smoke,” while unhealthy air quality levels suggest people should keep “outdoor activities light and short” and go indoors if symptoms develop, according to AirNow.

Free air purifiers to deal with wildfire risks being offered

By Dennis Wyatt

Turlock Journal, Friday, July 1, 2022

The Valley Air District will help low-income households weather wildfires that are ramping up due to dry conditions made worse by the continuing drought.

The agency will make 1,500 portable residential air purifying units with one replacement filter available for free to low-income households within disadvantaged communities in the San Joaquin Valley.

Turlock meets the definition of being a disadvantaged community.

Dubbed the “Clean Airs Pilot Program,” it involves residential versions of portable air purifiers. The purifiers — besides reducing the spreading of COVID, flu and even germs that cause colds — are designed to cleanse the air of smoke and other particles.

“Smoke from severe wildfires can inundate the Valley and make its way into homes, causing health impacts to our most vulnerable residents,” noted Samir Sheikh, Executive Director of the Valley Air District. “This program is designed to help families who may not otherwise be able to buy an in-home air purifier to protect their families during wildfires.”

In an indoor environment where windows and doors are closed and sealed tightly, HEPA air filtration devices, such as those that will be offered under this program, can reduce particulate matter indoors by more than 90 percent.

Use of air filtration devices to create “clean air rooms,” such as a bedroom, will ensure that the home has a dedicated space with safe indoor air quality during smoke events.

The 10 worst metro areas in the nation for air quality issues include Central Valley counties such as Bakersfield, Kern, Madera, Sacramento, Shasta and Butte.

Stanislaus County received a big red “F” on its report card in the American Lung Association’s State of the Air 2022 report. The region is also ranked amongst the most polluted in the country. The San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland region — which includes all of Stanislaus County — made the top 5 list for worst air quality in the nation in the year-round particle pollution and short-term particle pollution categories and in the top 15 list of worst regions for ozone.

Residents experiencing poor air quality due to wildfire smoke should move to a filtered, air-conditioned environment with windows closed. Common cloth and paper masks being used as protection from COVID-19 may not be sufficient protection from wildfire smoke inhalation.

For outdoor workers and other individuals that may not be able to remain indoors, state health authorities recommend the use of N95 facemasks as feasible.

Free air purifiers will be made available soon to low-income households. For more information, email: grants@valleyair.org, or speak to Air District staff, call 559-230-5800.

Your Heart and Lungs Might Take Exception to the Belief That Fireworks Are Beautiful

By Liz Juarez

GV Wire, Friday, July 1, 2022

As people celebrate Independence Day, San Joaquin Valley Air District officials are warning about the unhealthy air created by fireworks.

"We are asking Valley residents to be mindful and considerate of their neighbors and the many sensitive individuals whose health may be impacted by the emissions that come from lighting personal fireworks," said Samir Sheikh, the agency's executive director said.

How Do Fireworks Affect Valley Air Quality?

Officials say personal fireworks emit high levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) including soot, ash, and metals, which can cause serious health effects.

Instead of heading to the firework stands for packs of personal and individual fireworks, officials advise friends and families to participate in local professional, and community fireworks shows as a safer alternative to celebrate the Fourth of July.

"There are many ways to be patriotic and celebrate our nation's independence without lighting fireworks," said Sheikh.

The Fresno-Madera-Hanford metro area is often ranked at the top of the list for the nation's worst 24-hour particle pollution. This year, the region also ranked among the worst for annual particle pollution and unhealthy ozone levels.

PM2.5 Pollution Can Cause Serious Harm to Public Health

Each year for Fourth of July celebrations, air monitors across the Valley reflect spikes in PM2.5 concentrations from fireworks, often four to five times higher than the health-based federal standard, and typically during evening hours, when personal fireworks are most in use.

Officials say this type of air pollution compromises air quality and public health, and it is especially harmful to older adults, children, and those with respiratory diseases.

Fine particulate matter can invade the bloodstream, get deep into the lungs, and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Other symptoms from PM2.5 exposure can present themselves as headaches, fatigue, watery, dry eyes, coughing, wheezing, and throat, lung and sinus irritation—including shortness of breath and asthma attacks.