

Southern California Wildfires: Dec. 5, 2017

Thousands Evacuated From Fires North of Los Angeles

Fueled by fierce Santa Ana winds, a pair of fast-spreading wildfires in Southern California consumed dozens of square miles, killing one, destroying 150 structures and forcing thousands to flee their homes Tuesday morning.

Officials ordered thousands to evacuate Ventura, Calif., overnight Monday as the so-called Thomas fire grew out of control. About 500 firefighters are battling the blaze along with aerial crews in planes and helicopters.

"The fire growth is just absolutely exponential," Ventura County Fire Chief Mark Lorenzen told the Associated Press. "All that firefighters can do when we have winds like this is get out ahead, evacuate people and protect structures."

The second fire was reported Tuesday morning in the Kagel Canyon area, east of Ventura and north of Los Angeles. Named the Creek fire, it quickly burned 1,000 acres [and threatened homes](#), according to the Los Angeles Times.

Thousands Flee

The Thomas fire was first reported around 6:30 p.m. Monday in the mountains just north of Santa Paula, about 50 miles west-northwest of downtown Los Angeles.

The wildfire quickly grew to nearly 50 square miles in less than 12 hours, prompting evacuations in the cities of Santa Paula and Ventura. Evacuation shelters were set up at Nordhoff High School in Ojai and at the Ventura County Fairgrounds.

Mandatory evacuation orders were expanded to include [more than 7,700 homes early Tuesday morning](#), KABC-TV reported.

The fire had 0 percent perimeter containment, according to the Ventura County Fire Department.

Forced to wait until daybreak, fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters were expected to begin [to attack the fire at day](#), according to Ready Ventura County. The Ventura County Fire Department said one firefighter was injured battling the blaze; the L.A. Times said he was hit by a car while protecting homes.

Santa Ana winds of up to 50 mph were fanning the flames, pushing the fire's perimeter rapidly west-southwest, toward the Ventura County coast. Spot fires were reported ahead of the main fire perimeter.

The [National Weather Service warned Monday afternoon](#) that the strong Santa Ana winds, combined with very low humidity, provided an ideal setup for "very rapid fire growth." The strongest and longest-duration Santa Ana winds of the season, so far, were expected to continue through Thursday.

At least 263,000 customers were without power when the fire affected Southern California Edison transmission lines in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties.

The fire was visible from the National Weather Service office in Oxnard, but the office was not in danger. However, the NWS Doppler radar just north of Oxnard was [said to be "in the fire vicinity"](#) and was [placed in standby mode](#) due to the fire's proximity.

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The cause of the fire is unknown.

Ventura is some 60 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles. The city is home to about 110,000 people.

Kagel Canyon Fire

Tuesday morning, officials announced that the Creek fire was moving quickly and burning dozens of acres near Sylmar, according to the L.A. Times.

The fire burned 1,000 acres in the hills near homes off Little Tujunga Canyon Road, and the L.A. County Sheriff's Department said evacuation orders were in place [for some areas near the blaze](#), KTLA.com reported.

Helicopters were deployed Tuesday morning to fight the fire, the report added. The cause of the fire wasn't immediately known.

Source: <https://weather.com/news/news/2017-12-05-thomas-wildfire-ventura-santa-paula-california>

To Get Help

California

- United Way 2-1-1: Dial 2-1-1 or visit <http://www.211california.org/>
- American Red Cross: 916.993.7070; <http://www.redcross.org/local/gold-country>
- Office of Emergency Management: 916.657.9494; <http://www.caloes.ca.gov/home>

Shelters

Ventura County Fairgrounds at Miners Building (Includes an Animal Shelter for all types of animals.)

- 10 W. Harbor Blvd., Ventura

Nordhoff High School

- 1401 Maricopa Hwy, Ojai

Oxnard College Gymnasium

- 4000 Rose Ave., Oxnard

Mandatory Evacuations

Mandatory evacuations have been ordered for the following areas:

- Residents in Santa Paula, east of Dickenson Road, north of Monte Vista Drive along Highway 150 and South of Thomas Aquinas College to the area of Say Road.
- Residents in Santa Paula, west of Dickenson Road to Atmore Road, north of Foothill Road and west to Wheeler Canyon Road
- Residents in Upper Ojai, north of Highway 150 from Koenigstein Road west to the Dennison Grade, north to Reeves Road, east to McAndrew Road and north to Grand Avenue.
- Residents in Santa Paula and Ventura, north of Foothill Road west to Wheeler Canyon Road, north to Canada Larga Road and east to Barlow Canyon Road
- Residents in Ventura, south of Highway 33, east of Main St, north of Foothill Road and Hall Canyon Road and west of Canada Larga Road
- Residents in Ventura, east of North Ashwood Avenue along Loma Vista Road to North Victoria Avenue south of Foothill
- Residents in Ventura County, east of Hwy 33 west of Creek Road south of Ojai Valley Inn south of Hwy 150
- Residents in Ventura County, north of Canada Larga along Hwy 33 to south of Casitas Vista and north along Casitas

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Vista Road to Lake Casitas

- Thacher School 5025 Thacher Rd., Ojai, has been evacuated
- Vista Del Mar Hospital in Ventura has been evacuated and patients will be transported to L.A.-area facilities by ambulance

Voluntary Evacuations

- Residents in the City of Ventura south of Loma Vista, east of Day Road, West of Victoria Avenue and north of Telegraph Road
- Residents in the City of Ventura, east of Victoria north of Loma Vista South of Foothill west of Wells Road

Source: <http://www.readyventuracounty.org/>

Road Conditions

Call 511: The Department of Transportation offers its free 511 service for travel information and roadway conditions, including road and bridge closures, toll suspensions and major evacuation routes.

California

- [Department of Transportation](#)
- [PATH: Partners for Advanced Transit and Highways](#)
- [Division of Traffic Operations](#)
- [Division of Rail and Mass Transportation Program](#)

Road Closures

Soft Road Closures (Residents will need to provide proper identification to access their homes.):

- Wheeler Canyon Road at Foothill Road
- Highway 150 at Reeves Road
- Highway 150 at Santa Barbara Street

Hard Road Closures (Only public safety personnel will have access.):

- Highway 150 at Sisar Road
- Highway 150 at Stonegate Road
- Wells Road at Foothill Road
- Peck Road at Foothill Road

Source: <http://www.readyventuracounty.org/>

Power Outage

To report an outage, call:

California

- PG&E: 800.743.5002

Airport Closures

Passengers are urged to not come to the local airport unless your flight has been confirmed. If your flight has been canceled, please call your airline's customer service telephone number or rebook through your airline's website.

Flight delay information: <http://www.flightstats.com/go/Home/home.do>

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Wildfires

Know your risk

Wildfires can occur anywhere and can destroy homes, businesses, infrastructure, natural resources and agriculture. For more information, download the How to Prepare for a Wildfire guide ([link below](#)), which provides the basics of wildfires, explains how to protect yourself and your property, and details the steps to take now so that you can act quickly when you, your home or your business is in danger.

What

A wildfire is an unplanned, unwanted fire burning in a natural area, such as a forest, grassland, or prairie. As building development expands into these areas, homes and businesses may be situated in or near areas susceptible to wildfires. This is called the wildland urban interface.

Wildfires can cause death or injury to people and animals, damage or destroy structures and disrupt community services including transportation, gas, power, communications and other services. The impact may cover large areas, with extensive burning, embers traveling more than a mile away from the wildfire itself and smoke causing health issues for people far away from the fire. Wildfires damage watersheds, leaving areas prone to flooding and mudslides for many years.

Where

Wildfires can occur anywhere in the country. They can start in remote wilderness areas, in national parks or even in your back yard. Wildfires can start from natural causes, such as lightning, but most are caused by humans, either accidentally—from cigarettes, campfires or outdoor burning—or intentionally.

When

Wildfires can occur at any time throughout the year, but the potential is always higher during periods with little or no rainfall, when brush, grass and trees are dry and burn more easily. High winds can also contribute to spreading the fire. Your community may have a designated wildfire season when the risk is particularly high.

Fire weather watch

Fire weather watch: Dangerous fire weather conditions are possible over the next 12 to 72 hours

Steps to Take

- Turn on your TV or radio. You'll get the latest weather updates and emergency instructions.
- Know where to go. If you are ordered to evacuate, know the route to take and have plan of where you will go. Check-in with your friends and family.
- Keep your car fueled, in good condition and stocked with emergency supplies and a change of clothes.

Before wildfire season

Make a Wildfire plan

- Know your [wildfire risk](#).
- Familiarize yourself with local emergency plans. Know where to go and how to get there should you need to evacuate.
- Make a wildfire [emergency plan](#), including an evacuation plan and a communication plan.
- Many communities have text or email alerting systems for emergency notifications. To find out what alerts are available in your area, search the Internet with your town, city or county name and the word "alerts."
- Build or restock your [emergency preparedness kit](#), including a flashlight, batteries, cash and first aid supplies.
- Stay tuned to your phone [alerts](#), TV or radio for weather updates, emergency instructions or evacuation orders.

Prepare Your Home

- Create and maintain a buffer extending about 30 feet from you home that is free of anything that will burn, such as wood piles, dried leaves, newspapers, brush or other landscaping. From 30 feet to 100 feet reduce or replace as much of the most flammable vegetation as possible and prune vegetation, create "fuel breaks," such as driveways,

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gravel walkways and lawns. Work with neighbors to create spaces of up to 200 feet around your homes where vegetation is thinned to remove underbrush and tall trees do not touch each other for continuous canopies.

- Regularly clean the roof and gutters.
- Connect garden hoses long enough to reach any area of the home and fill garbage cans, tubs or other large containers with water.
- Review your homeowner's insurance policy and also prepare or update a list of your home's contents.

During a wildfire

- If there is a wildfire in the area, be ready to evacuate on short notice.
- If you see a wildfire and haven't received evacuation orders yet, call 9-1-1. Don't assume that someone else has already called.
- If ordered to evacuate during a wildfire, do it immediately—make sure and tell someone where you are going and when you have arrived.
- If you or someone you are with has been burned, call 9-1-1 or seek help immediately; cool and cover burns to reduce chance of further injury or infection.

After a wildfire

Returning Home

- Return home only when authorities say it is safe.
- For several hours after the fire, maintain a "fire watch." Check and recheck for smoke, sparks or hidden embers throughout the house, including the roof and the attic.
- Use caution when entering burned areas as hazards may still exist, including hot spots, which can flare up without warning. Evacuate immediately if you smell smoke.

Cleaning Your Home

- Wear a NIOSH certified-respirator (dust mask) and wet debris down to minimize breathing dust particles.
- Discard any food that has been exposed to heat, smoke or soot.
- Do not use water that you think may be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands or to make ice or baby formula.
- Photograph damage to your property for insurance purposes.

Resources

- [Wildfire Safety Social Media Toolkit](#) (link)
- [Cloud of Smoke](#) (video)
- [When the fire starts](#) (video)
- [United States Fire Administration](#) (link)
- [Smokey Bear](#) (link)
- [United States Forest Service](#) (link)
- [American Red Cross](#) (link)
- [Wildfire Banners and Web Badges](#) (link)
- [NFPA's Firewise Communities Program](#) (link)
- [Fire Adapted Community](#) (link)
- [How to Prepare for a Wildfire](#) (PDF)
- [Wildfire Playbook](#) (PDF)

Source: <https://www.ready.gov/wildfires>