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# Holy fire grows to 21,473 acres, now 29 percent contained, 3,000 structures near Lake Elsinore still threatened



Firefighters battle flames from approaching homes at the top of Westlong Street in Lake Elsinore Friday, August 10, 2018. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

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By **BEATRIZ E. VALENZUELA** |

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## UPDATES:

### [Some evacuations were lifted on Saturday morning](#)

The containment of the Holy fire almost tripled overnight, from 10 percent to 29 percent, even as the acres burned increased from 19,107 to 21,473, the Cleveland National Forest said Saturday morning.

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Water-dropping aircraft continued their assault on the fast-charging [Holy fire](#) – which swelled to an estimated 19,107 charred acres Friday evening, as several flare-ups occurred throughout the day in the Cleveland National Forest.

“We’re dealing with steep terrain, dry fuel and wind in the area,” said Thanh Nguyen, public information officer with SoCal Team 1, in charge of communications for the Holy Fire. “All of that contributes to fire behavior.”

The geographical area of Lake Elsinore contributes to the firefighting phenomenon known as [the Elsinore Effect](#), Nguyen said. Usually, wildfires burn much slower downhill than uphill.

“What’s unique about the area, is that we will get a weather pattern that creates winds quickly moving down the mountainside,” he said. “That’s what we saw yesterday.”

The weather phenomenon has not manifested every day, Nguyen said.

The flames Friday afternoon threatened several properties that dot the winding roads near Highway 74 and Main Divide Road. Firefighters were focusing on the Coldwater Canyon area; Santiago Peak, home to communication towers for cell signals and law enforcement; and the Lake Elsinore neighborhoods including Horsethief Canyon, McVickers and El Cariso Village.

The flames were picking up on the north side of the fire about 2 p.m.

"We continue to actively engage, but cannot get ahead of the fire," Cleveland National Forest officials said via Twitter on Friday.

Up to 3,000 structures are "moderately" threatened," Nguyen said about 1:30 p.m.

Officially, 12 had burned, he said, though assessment teams were in the field to note any other damage. Most if not all burned in the forested communities of [Holy Jim](#) and Trabuco canyons in Orange County.

Dan Pritchett, a resident of the area for 30 years, said Friday morning his trailer home was destroyed by the blaze.

"I slept in the dirt last night," he said as he attempted to get an old school bus running. He planned on driving the bus up the dirt road to his hilltop perch and live in it until he could rebuild.

He stayed at his property atop Main Divide Road Friday trying to put out hot spots.

Also Friday, the man accused of setting the Holy fire, [Forrest Gordon Clark, 51, did not enter a plea](#) at his arraignment Friday. He said the charges against him are "a lie" and that he would "easily" be able to raise the \$1 million bail. Clark's arraignment was rescheduled for Aug. 17.

The weather is expected to bend slightly in firefighters' favor this weekend. The high temperature in Lake Elsinore on Friday was 96 degrees; the forecast for Saturday is 93 and 91 on Sunday with increasing humidity each day, said Jimmy Taeger, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. Winds should remain at 5-10 mph with gusts of 13-20 mph.

The glow of the orange flames could be seen in the nearby hills. Despite 911 calls from worried residents of Brea and Anaheim, the fire was not endangering those cities, Nguyen said.

One firefighter had been reported injured Thursday. Other than the fact that he was alive, Nguyen didn't have any details.

Two firefighting planes, an air tanker and a plane carrying a person who orchestrates the aerial operations, were forced to land at an airport after one or both were struck by birds. The planes were checked out, Nguyen said.

**MORE:** [This map shows where the Holy fire is burning, forcing evacuations and closures](#)

Gov. Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency Thursday in Riverside and Orange counties, a proclamation that will allow them to receive disaster assistance from the state. The order also waives fees for replacing vehicle records such as licenses and registrations destroyed by fire, and it eliminates the one-week waiting period for applying for unemployment benefits for those who have lost their job because of the fire.

The blaze reached 10 percent containment by late Friday. Containment is the percentage of the fire's perimeter that firefighters have determined the blaze will no long spread beyond.

Cleveland National Forest officials say the Holy fire has left Orange County.



**Cleveland NF**

@ClevelandNF

We have been receiving inquiries about the fire burning back towards [#OrangeCounty](#). The fire is burning in Cold Water Canyon around Santiago Peak, & is not burning in OC. FFs are continuing firefighting effort in the area. [#HolyFire](#)

[@socalteam1](#)

9:38 PM - Aug 9, 2018

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Authorities have issued mandatory evacuation orders for the Lake Elsinore-area communities of:

- McVickers Canyon
- Rice Canyon
- Horsethief Canyon
- Glen Eden
- El Cariso Village
- Sycamore Creek
- Rancho Capistrano
- Holy Jim Canyon
- Trabuco Canyon
- The Ortega Highway corridor from the Grand Avenue in Riverside County to Nichols Institute in Orange County

All of the schools in the [Lake Elsinore Unified School District](#), the [Perris Elementary School District](#), the Perris Union High School District, the [Menifee Union School District](#), and the [Romoland School District](#), as well as Santa Rosa Academy were closed Friday. Lake Elsinore's school year will now start Aug. 20 with no extra instruction days added to the calendar. The Corona-Norco Unified School District announced that the start of the school year at Temescal Valley Elementary and Todd Academy would be postponed to Aug. 20.

The Highway 74 closure in Lake Elsinore was extended Friday to Lakeside High. The southbound 15 Freeway off-ramp at Indian Truck Trail were closed until further notice, Caltrans said. Both southbound and northbound off ramps at Lake Street in Lake Elsinore were closed during the morning hours, but re-opened in the afternoon.

Get road updates at <http://quickmap.dot.ca.gov> and on [Twitter at @caltrans8](#).

Eastvale's 65th Street Concerts in the Park Series event scheduled for Friday was postponed because of poor air quality. It has been rescheduled for 7:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 7. Moreno Valley's movie and concert – featuring the band Wildfire – set for Friday was postponed to 6:45 p.m. Friday, Aug. 17, because of the air quality.

GoFundMe has provided a link to a webpage that lists verified campaigns to raise money for Holy fire-related causes. That page is [gofundme.com/cause/holy-fire](https://gofundme.com/cause/holy-fire).

## **Pet assistance**

Riverside County Animal Services is working on a plan to reunite displaced pets with their owners.

The plan includes transporting the evacuees' pets directly back to them at the drop-off location at Temescal Canyon High, Animal Services Director Robert Miller said.

"We're planning to use our animal control trucks as a Lyft or Uber service for people's pets," Miller said. "These residents have been through a lot. And we don't think forcing them to drive a two-hour, round-trip journey to reunite with their pets is something that we're comfortable with. Bringing the pets back to them seems to be a much better solution to better assist pet owners getting back to some state of normalcy."

More information about this plan will be posted on Animal Services' website — [rcdas.org](http://rcdas.org) — and social media platforms.

Riverside County Animal Services' number is 951-358-7387. Pet owners should know that this number kicks into an after hours, emergency service after 5 p.m. on weekdays and during most weekend hours.

Animal Friends of the Valleys in Wildomar is at capacity, but Riverside County Animal Services is still accepting animals at Temescal Canyon High and at the San Jacinto shelter, 581 S. Grand Ave.

Neither organization is charging board and care fees for the evacuated families.

## **Caution with ash**

Riverside County's public health officer, Dr. Cameron Kaiser, offered tips on safely dealing with the ash.

- Avoid activities that stir up ash.
- Do not allow children to play in ash.
- Wash ash off toys before children play with them.

- Clean ash off pets.
- Clean-up of larger quantities of ash should never be done by people who have lung or heart conditions.
- If you must clean up a larger quantity of ash, wear a tight-fitting respirator mask, gloves, long-sleeved shirts and long pants. The mask should cover your mouth and nose and seal properly.
- Avoid sweeping up dry ash into the air.
- Use water and wet cloth or mop to clean items and surfaces.
- Do not use leaf blowers, which can stir up ash and can contribute to large particles becoming smaller, more hazardous particles.



Flames form the Holy fire leap behind Modjeska Peak with Santiago Peak to the right on Thursday, Aug. 9. Some viewers thought it looked like a volcano eruption! (Photo by Mark Girardeau)

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