

San Francisco chokes on toxic air as wildfires rage

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Schools and tourist attractions across the San Francisco Bay Area were shut Friday as smoke from California's deadliest ever wildfire a three hour drive away produced air quality levels worse than in polluted megacities in South Asia.

The closures came as the number of people missing from the giant Camp Fire, which has devoured an area roughly the size of Chicago since it broke out last week, soared to more than 600, with 63 confirmed dead.

President Donald Trump is set to visit the tinder-dry state on Saturday to meet victims of the inferno, which has laid waste to the town of Paradise at the northern foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains, destroying around 10,000 homes.

Some 180 miles (290 kilometers) to the southwest, San Francisco ordered all [public schools](#) shut and its iconic cable cars returned to their stations as the Air Quality Index soared to 213, comparable to Dhaka, Bangladesh and worse than Kolkata, India.

"San Francisco's air quality has moved from red or 'unhealthy' to purple or 'very unhealthy' due to local wildfires and weather patterns," the SFMTA transport authority said on its website.

"The Department of Public Health highly recommends that everyone stay indoors and avoid exposure to the outside air."

Mayor London Breed announced that public buses would be free for the day in order to ensure people have access to enclosed transportation.



The so-called Camp Fire in the state's north has so far swallowed 142,000 acres, destroying almost 10,000 buildings and laying waste to the town of Paradise, in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains

Photos posted on social media showed the famous Golden Gate Bridge shrouded in thick smog.

Missing toll jumps

On Thursday, authorities raised the number of missing people from 300 to 631 as investigators went back and reviewed emergency calls made when the Camp Fire erupted on November 8.

"I want you to understand that the chaos we were dealing with was extraordinary" Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea told journalists of the early days of the [fire](#), explaining the alarming increase.

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