

1st big Southern California wildfire of 2020 keeps on raging

August 3 2020



The Apple Fire burns behind mountains near Beaumont, Calif., Sunday, Aug. 2, 2020. (AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)

A huge wildfire in mountains east of Los Angeles that is Southern California's biggest blaze so far this year was still raging Monday, with

thousands of people forced to evacuate their homes.

The blaze in Riverside County, among several wildfires across California, had consumed more than 41 square miles (about 106 square kilometers) of dry brush and timber since it broke out Friday evening, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

As of Monday morning, it was just 5% contained and the fire along with coronavirus precautions made for added stress at an evacuation center, said John Medina, an American Red Cross spokesman.

Volunteers used to "close contact" with evacuees have had to adjust their approach during a time of social distancing, Medina said.

"I mean, that's part of the recovery of a disaster, is that you have to show warmth and love and caring. And that's hard when you're standing six feet away. So that's the biggest challenge," Medina told [KESQ-TV](#).

Bill Boehm helped his mother evacuate her home with her three horses and said the pandemic hasn't stopped people from coming together to assist each other.

"Everyone seemed to be wearing masks and such, so that type of precaution was still going on," Boehm told the news station.



A brush fire burns at the Apple Fire in Banning, Calif., Saturday, Aug. 1, 2020.
(AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)

Investigators are trying to determine the cause of the blaze that began as two adjacent fires in Cherry Valley, a [rural area](#) near the city of Beaumont, about 85 miles (137 kilometers) east of downtown Los Angeles.

Flames raced along brushy ridge tops and came close to houses while firefighters attacked from the ground and air.

One home and two outbuildings were destroyed, California fire officials said. No injuries were reported.

In Northern California, evacuations were ordered after a wildfire that sparked Sunday afternoon spread quickly and burned near homes near the East Park Reservoir in Colusa County. Complicating firefighters' efforts were temperatures in the area north of Sacramento were expected to hit the upper 90s (around 36 Celsius) by Monday afternoon.

On California's central coast, a fire in San Luis Obispo County was 60% contained Monday after burning more than 2 square miles (6 square kilometers) of brush east of the community of Santa Margarita. Two structures were destroyed but officials said it was unclear whether they were homes.



Firefighters work against the Apple Fire near Banning, Calif., Sunday, Aug. 2, 2020. (AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)



Hand crews work on the remaining hot spots from a brush fire at the Apple Fire in Cherry Valley, Calif., Saturday, Aug. 1, 2020. (AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)



Hand crews line up to work on the remaining hot spots from a brush fire at the Apple Fire in Cherry Valley, Calif., Saturday, Aug. 1, 2020. (AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)



A firefighter watches the Apple Fire in Banning, Calif., Sunday, Aug. 2, 2020.
(AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)



Firefighters watch the Apple Fire in Banning, Calif., Sunday, Aug. 2, 2020. (AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)



A firefighter watches the Apple Fire in Banning, Calif., Sunday, Aug. 2, 2020.
(AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)



A firefighter watches a brush fire at the Apple Fire in Banning, Calif., Saturday, Aug. 1, 2020. (AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)



A firefighter watches as a helicopter drops water onto the Apple Fire near Banning, Calif., Sunday, Aug. 2, 2020. (AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)



Some rises behind an area burned by a brush fire at the Apple Fire in Cherry Valley, Calif., Saturday, Aug. 1, 2020. (AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)



An area sits scorched by a brush fire at the Apple Fire in Cherry Valley, Calif., Saturday, Aug. 1, 2020. (AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)



Hand crews work on the remaining hot spots from a brush fire at the Apple Fire in Cherry Valley, Calif., Saturday, Aug. 1, 2020. (AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)



A firefighter runs as the wind blows at the Apple Fire in Banning, Calif., Sunday, Aug. 2, 2020. (AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)

In Riverside County, officials allowed flames from the so-called Apple Fire to run up the side of Mount San Gorgonio, an 11,000-foot (3,350-meter) peak, because it wasn't safe to let crews work in such steep, rugged terrain, said Lisa Cox, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Forest Service.

Evacuation orders and advisories were issued for about 2,500 homes in mountain, canyon and foothill neighborhoods. Campgrounds and hiking trails were closed in the San Gorgonio Wilderness area of the San Bernardino National Forest.

A huge smoke plume was visible for miles around and contributed to [poor air quality](#).

The temperature hit 109 degrees (43 Celsius) Sunday in nearby Palm Springs but conditions were expected to cool slightly on Monday.

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