

# Wildfires rip through California wine country, thousands flee homes

September 28 2020

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Wildfire rips through the world-famous Napa Valley, with smoke rising from the fast-moving Glass Fire on hills on September 27, 2020 in Calistoga, California

Thousands of people were forced to flee their homes in California's Napa Valley Monday as wildfires ripped through the region's world-

famous wine country.

Under an opaque orange sky, trees and vineyards were consumed and houses devastated by the fire that had burned its way over more than 11,000 acres (4,500 hectares) by Monday morning.

Some vineyards had already gone up in smoke, such as the Chateau Boswell Winery in the town of St Helena, while others, like Merus Wines and Davis Estates were under imminent threat from the fast-moving flames.

"I grabbed my neighbor. I wouldn't take 'no' for an answer," Lorraine Fuentez, of Calistoga told the San Francisco Chronicle, having fled with her elderly neighbor.

The Los Angeles Times reported that the fire had begun to burn houses early Monday on the edges of Sonoma County's most populous town, Santa Rosa, home to 177,000 residents, which was devastated three years ago by another fire.

Mandatory evacuation orders were issued for parts of the towns of St Helena and Calistoga, local media reported, saying that more than 8,500 structures were under threat from the flames.

Strong winds, gusting up to 55 mph, were blowing embers and spreading the blaze, named the Glass Fire, which more than 1,000 firefighters were trying to get under control.



Fire fighters intervene as a home bursts into flames on the edge of Santa Rosa, on September 28, 2020

Santa Rosa resident Jes Sihota, 49, a radiology technician, told The Press Democrat newspaper the flying embers were the size of golf balls. He said he sent his family away but stayed to spray the roof of his and his neighbors' houses with water from a garden to slow the flames' advance.

"I'm no cowboy, I just didn't want to lose my home," he told the paper.

The Glass Fire began Sunday but firefighters reported three other conflagrations in the area Monday morning, which they were dealing with as one large blaze that quickly burned more than 1,000 acres, destroying an unknown number of homes.



Firefighters were deploying 133 engines, 22 water tenders, five helicopters and 35 bulldozers, the Napa Valley Register said.

The Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) company cut electricity to 65,000 homes in northern California as a precaution.



Firefighters keep watch on an approaching fire line on the outskirts of Santa Rosa, on September 27, 2020: the wildfire quickly spread over the mountains and reached Santa Rosa where it has begun to affect homes.



Buildings burn along Highway 12 as fire approaches Santa Rosa, California on September 28, 2020





In this long exposure photograph, burning hills create a flaming landscape during the Glass fire in Napa County's St. Helena, California on September 27, 2020, described by authorities as a wildfire with a 'dangerous rate of spread.'

Napa and Sonoma were badly hit with wildfires in 2017, when 44 people died and thousands of buildings were razed.

California has been battling massive wildfires for months, stoked by dry conditions, strong seasonal winds and high temperatures that the state's leadership has blamed on climate change.

Parts of the state have been engulfed at times in thick smoke, while evacuations have been complicated by the coronavirus which has hit California hard.

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