

California crews make fire gains; Washington town evacuated

August 5 2022, by HAVEN DALEY and CHRISTOPHER WEBER



This photo provided by the Washington State Department of Transportation shows smoke from a wildfire burning south of Lind, Wash. on Thursday, Aug. 4, 2022. Sheriff's officials are telling residents in the town of Lind in eastern Washington to evacuate because of a growing wildfire south of town that was burning homes. Credit: Washington State Department of Transportation via AP

California firefighters made gains against the state's deadliest and largest wildfire of the year just as an eastern Washington town was evacuated Thursday because of a blaze that was burning homes.

At about 1:30 p.m. the Adams County Sheriff's Office said on Facebook that homes in Lind had burned.

"At this time all residents of the town of Lind need to evacuate immediately," the sheriff's office said in the post.

Later Thursday, Sheriff Dale Wagner said six homes had burned as well as eight other structures. With the help of state and local resources, Wagner said the fire was starting to calm down and all evacuations were lifted as of 8 p.m.

"They will be fighting it through the night to make sure it doesn't flare up anymore or get worse," he said, adding that firefighters were dealing with [high heat](#) and windy conditions.

He said one firefighter suffered smoke inhalation and was flown to Spokane for treatment.

Lind is a community of about 500 people approximately 75 miles (121 kilometers) southwest of Spokane.

The State Fire Marshal's office said the blaze had burned through about 3.9 square miles (10.1 square kilometers). Homes, infrastructure and crops were threatened. The cause of the fire was under investigation.



This photo provided by the Washington State Department of Transportation shows smoke from a wildfire burning south of Lind, Wash. on Thursday, Aug. 4, 2022. Sheriff's officials are telling residents in the town of Lind in eastern Washington to evacuate because of a growing wildfire south of town that was burning homes. Credit: Washington State Department of Transportation via AP

Meanwhile, in California, forecasters warned Thursday that spiking temperatures and plunging humidity levels could create conditions for further wildfire growth.

After five days of no containment, the McKinney Fire in Siskiyou County near the Oregon border was 10% surrounded by Wednesday evening. Bulldozers and hand crews were making progress carving

firebreaks around much of the rest of the blaze, fire officials said.

At the fire's southeastern corner, evacuation orders for sections of Yreka, home to about 7,800 people, were downgraded to warnings, allowing residents to return home but with a caution that the situation remained dangerous.

About 1,300 people remained under evacuation orders, officials said at a community meeting Wednesday evening.

The fire didn't advance much at midweek, following several days of brief but heavy rain from thunderstorms that provided cloudy, damper weather. But as the clouds clear and humidity levels drops in the coming days, the fire could roar again, authorities warned.



A chimney stands at a home destroyed by the McKinney Fire on Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2022, in Klamath National Forest, Calif. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger

"This is a sleeping giant right now," said Darryl Laws, a unified incident commander on the blaze.

Weekend temperatures could reach triple digits as the region dries out again, said meteorologist Brian Nieuwenhuis with the National Weather Service office in Medford, Oregon.

"The heat, the dry conditions, along with afternoon breezes, that's the kind of thing that could keep the fire pretty active," he said Thursday.

The blaze broke out last Friday and has charred nearly 92 square miles (238 square kilometers) of forestland, left tinder-dry by drought. More than 100 homes and other buildings have burned and four bodies have been found, including two in a burned car in a driveway.

The blaze was driven at first by fierce winds ahead of a thunderstorm cell. More storms earlier this week proved a mixed blessing. A drenching rain Tuesday dumped up to 3 inches (7.6 cm) on some eastern sections of the blaze but most of the fire area got next to nothing, said Dennis Burns, a fire behavior analyst.



A helicopter drops water on a hot spot while battling the McKinney Fire on Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2022, in Klamath National Forest, Calif. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger

The latest storm also brought concerns about possible river flooding and mudslides. A private contractor in a pickup truck who was helping the firefighting effort was hurt when a bridge gave out and washed away the vehicle, Kreider said. The contractor's injuries were not life-threatening.

The progress against the flames came too late for many people in the scenic hamlet of Klamath River, which was home to about 200 people before the fire reduced many of the homes to ashes, along with the post office, community center and other buildings.

At an evacuation center Wednesday, Bill Simms said that three of the four victims were his neighbors. Two were a [married couple](#) who lived up the road.

"I don't get emotional about stuff and material things," Simms said. "But when you hear my next-door neighbors died ... that gets a little emotional."



Sydney Corrales passes a lodge that burned during the McKinney Fire, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2022, in Klamath National Forest, Calif. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger

Their names haven't been officially confirmed, which could take several days, said Courtney Kreider, a spokesperson with the Siskiyou County

Sheriff's Office.

Simms, a 65-year-old retiree, bought his property six years ago as a second home with access to hunting and fishing. He went back to check on his property Tuesday and found it was destroyed.

"The house, the guest house and the RV were gone. It's just wasteland, devastation," Simms said. He found the body of one of his two cats, which he buried. The other cat is still missing. He was able to take his two dogs with him to the shelter.

Harlene Schwander, 82, lost the home she had just moved into a month ago to be closer to her son and daughter-in-law. Their home survived but her house was torched.

Schwander, an artist, said she only managed to grab a few family photos and some jewelry before evacuating. Everything else—including her art collection—went up in flames.



In this photo released by the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office is the washed away pick up truck of a private contractor who was aiding the firefighting efforts near Klamath River, Calif., Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2022. Amid storms Tuesday the contractor was hurt when a bridge gave out and washed his pickup truck away, said Courtney Kreider, a spokesperson with the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office. The McKinney Fire was still out of control on Wednesday despite some progress by firefighters who took advantage of thunderstorms that dumped rain and temporarily lowered heat in the parched region. Credit: Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office via AP

"I'm sad. Everybody says it was just stuff, but it was all I had," she said.

Meanwhile, firefighters expected Thursday to fully surround a 1,000-acre (404-hectare) spot fire on the northern edge of the McKinney

Fire.

To the southeast, wet weather was a concern for burn scars from last year's big wildfires along the Sierra's eastern front. The weather service issued flood watches for Thursday and Friday along the California-Nevada line. They included areas burned in the Caldor Fire east of Sacramento and the Tamarack Fire west and south of Lake Tahoe.

Despite the scattered storms, California and much of the rest of the West is in drought and wildfire danger is high, with the historically worst of the fire season still to come. Fires are burning in Montana, Idaho and Nebraska and have destroyed homes and threaten communities.



Flames burn inside a tree along Highway 96 which remains closed due to the McKinney Fire on Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2022, in Klamath National Forest, Calif.

Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



Sheriff's deputies search a scorched residence following the McKinney Fire on Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2022, in Klamath National Forest, Calif. Their team did not find any fire victims at the property. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



A helicopter carries a water bucket while battling the McKinney Fire, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2022, in Klamath National Forest, Calif. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



Timber walks past the remains of a lodge that burned in the McKinney Fire, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2022, in Klamath National Forest, Calif. The property owner, whose adjacent home survived the blaze, was surveying damage. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



A sheriff's deputy searches a scorched property following the McKinney Fire on Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2022, in Klamath National Forest, Calif. His team did not find any fire victims at the location. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



Sheriff's deputies search a scorched residence following the McKinney Fire on Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2022, in Klamath National Forest, Calif. Their team did not find any fire victims at the property. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



Sheriff's Deputy Johnson carries remains of a McKinney Fire victim from a destroyed home on Monday, Aug. 1, 2022, in Klamath National Forest, Calif. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



A search and rescue canine leaves a home leveled by the McKinney Fire on Monday, Aug. 1, 2022, in Klamath National Forest, Calif. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



Sheriff's Deputy Johnson stands at a burned home as search and rescue workers recover the remains of a McKinney Fire victim on Monday, Aug. 1, 2022, in Klamath National Forest, Calif. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



The Elmo Fire burns near Elmo and Dayton, Mont., on the western shore of Flathead Lake on Monday, Aug. 1, 2022. Credit: Hunter D'Antuono/Flathead Beacon via AP



Flames from the Elmo Fire burn around Dayton, Mont., on the western shore of Flathead Lake on Monday, Aug. 1, 2022. Credit: Hunter D'Antuono/Flathead Beacon via AP



Sheriff's deputies leave a home where a McKinney Fire victim was found on Monday, Aug. 1, 2022, in Klamath National Forest, Calif. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger



An aircraft dumps water on the edge of the Elmo Fire burning on the western shore of Flathead Lake, Mont., on Monday, Aug. 1, 2022. Credit: Hunter D'Antuono/Flathead Beacon via AP



A plane dumps fire retardant to contain the Elmo Fire burning on the western shore of Flathead Lake, Mont., on Monday, Aug. 1, 2022. Credit: Hunter D'Antuono/Flathead Beacon via AP



This photo provided by the Washington State Department of Transportation shows smoke from a wildfire burning south of Lind, Wash. on Thursday, Aug. 4, 2022. Sheriff's officials are telling residents in the town of Lind in eastern Washington to evacuate because of a growing wildfire south of town that was burning homes. Credit: Washington State Department of Transportation via AP

Scientists say climate change has made the West warmer and drier over the last three decades and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive. California has seen its largest, most destructive and deadliest wildfires in the last five years.

In northwestern Montana, a fire that has destroyed at least four homes and forced the evacuation of about 150 residences west of Flathead Lake

continued to be pushed north by winds on Wednesday, [fire](#) officials said.

The Moose Fire in Idaho has burned more than 85 square miles (220 square km) in the Salmon-Challis National Forest while threatening homes, mining operations and fisheries near the town of Salmon.

And a wildfire in northwestern Nebraska led to evacuations and destroyed or damaged several homes near the small city of Gering.

© 2022 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: California crews make fire gains; Washington town evacuated (2022, August 5) retrieved 21 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-08-california-crews-gains-washington-town.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.