

California and the West broil in record heat wave

September 7 2022, by ADAM BEAM



Freddie Ramirez, left, is handed a bottle of water from Kim Burrell, in Sacramento, Calif., Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2022. Burrell and Debbie Chang, unseen, passed out water and snacks to those they find in need on the streets. Temperatures in the Sacramento area are forecasted to reach record highs Tuesday. Credit: AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli

A record-setting heat wave made life miserable in much of the West on Tuesday, with California stretching into its second week of excessive heat that taxed the state's power supply with record-setting demand and brought it perilously close to ordering rolling outages while people were desperately trying to stay cool.

The California Independent System Operator, the entity that oversees the state's [electrical grid](#), issued a Stage 3 alert allowing it to draw on emergency power sources. The alert is one step below actually ordering rotating [power outages](#).

CAISO said the peak electricity demand on Tuesday hit 52,061 megawatts, far above the previous high of 50,270 megawatts set on July 24, 2006.

Demand plunged as dusk fell, businesses closed and CAISO sent out a message on its [mobile phone](#) app begging customers to cut back their use, warning that "power interruptions may occur unless you take action."

The Stage 3 alert ended at 8 p.m. without outages. CAISO thanked customers, tweeting that "consumer conservation played a big part in protecting electric grid reliability."

Even without intentional blackouts, however, tens of thousands of people found themselves without power in Northern California.

Some 35,700 people lost electricity in Silicon Valley and southern and inland areas of the San Francisco Bay Area and most of the outages were heat-related, said Jason King of Pacific Gas & Electric said Tuesday evening. There was no word on when power would resume.



Freddie Ramirez, left, is handed a bottle of water from Kim Burrell, in Sacramento, Calif., Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2022. Burrell and Debbie Chang, right, passed out water and snacks to those they find in need on the streets. Temperatures in the Sacramento area are forecasted to reach record highs Tuesday. Credit: AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli

Earlier in the day, Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom urged residents to conserve, warning in a [video message](#) that "the risk for outages is real and it's immediate."

"This heat wave is on track to be both the hottest and the longest on record for the state and many parts of the West for the month of September," Newsom said. "Everyone has to do their part to help step up for just a few more days."

California's Department of Cannabis Control urged marijuana businesses to turn off their lights and power or use a backup generator.

California's state capital of Sacramento hit an all-time high Tuesday of 116 degrees Fahrenheit (46.7 degrees Celsius), breaking the previous record of 114 F set in July 1925, according to the National Weather Service.

Sacramento native Debbie Chang was out walking in Capitol Park on Tuesday morning, pulling a wagon of Pop-Tarts and water to hand out to [homeless people](#). She lives in an old house that relies on wall-mounted units that she says don't work so well. The temperature reached 91 degrees (33 C) in her house Monday night.



Debbie Chang, right, hands a bottle of water to a man on the street in Sacramento, Calif., Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2022. Chang and Kim Burrell, unseen, passed out water and snacks to those they find in need on the streets. Temperatures in the Sacramento area are forecasted to reach record highs Tuesday. Credit: AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli

"The past few years in California, it's really rough," she said. "I really love this state. And growing up I never imagined I'd exactly want to live outside of California, unless maybe internationally. But this is very difficult."

In the San Francisco Bay Area, temperatures tied or broke all-time highs in a half-dozen cities. In Los Angeles, temperatures were in the 90s on Tuesday, prompting the nation's second-largest school district to limit the use of asphalt and concrete playgrounds.

In neighboring Nevada, Reno's 106 F (41 C) on Tuesday was its hottest day ever recorded in September and smashed the previous record for the date, 96 F (35.5 C) in 1944. It came within 2 degrees of the all-time high for any day or month of 108 F (42 C), set in July 2002 and equaled in July 2007, according to the National Weather Service.



Debbie Chang, left, and Kim Burrell, right, load bottled water into a cart to be distributed to people on the street in Sacramento, Calif., Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2022. The pair passed out water and snacks to those they find in need on the streets. Temperatures in the Sacramento area are forecasted to reach record highs Tuesday. Credit: AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli

In Utah's Salt Lake City—a city at more than 4,000 feet (1,219 meters) elevation—temperatures were about 20 degrees higher than normal, hitting 105 F (40.5 C) on Tuesday, the hottest September day recorded going back to 1874.

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. In the last five years,

California has experienced the largest and most destructive fires in state history.

A wildfire that started Friday in the Northern California community of Weed killed two people and one that erupted Monday and spread rapidly in the Hemet area of Southern California also killed two people.

Authorities said they were found in the same area and apparently died while trying to flee the flames.



Pulling a cart filled with bottled water and snacks Kim Burrell, left, and Debbie Chang, right, walk the streets of Sacramento, Calif., Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2022. The pair have taken it upon themselves to pass out water and snacks to those they find in need on the streets. Temperatures in the Sacramento area are expected to reach record highs Tuesday. Credit: AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli

Though the heat wave was likely to peak in most places on Tuesday, extremely high temperatures are expected to continue for several more days.

"It is a genuinely dangerous event from a human health perspective," said Daniel Swain, a climate scientist with the University of California, Los Angeles Institute for Environment and Sustainability

Sacramento County officials were using the air-conditioned lobbies of some of their [public buildings](#) as cooling centers for people with nowhere else to go and offering free transportation for people who could not get there. Officials even handed out motel vouchers to some homeless people through a program they normally reserve for the winter, according to county spokeswoman Janna Haynes.

"While a lot of people can stay home, a lot of people do not have a home to stay in," Haynes said.



A man creates giant soap suds bubbles at dawn Monday, Sept. 5, on the Manhattan Beach Pier in Manhattan Beach, Calif., as a severe heat wave gripped the state. Most of California's 39 million people are facing sweltering weather. Credit: AP Photo/John Antczak



The sun's peaks over the California Public Employees Retirement System's building in Sacramento, Calif., Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2022. Due to the recent heat wave CalPERS employees were sent home to conserve energy. Credit: AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli



Olof Wood walks across reef-like structures called microbialites, exposed by receding waters at the Great Salt Lake Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2022, near Salt Lake City. A blistering heat wave is breaking records in Utah, where temperatures hit 105 degrees Fahrenheit (40.5 degrees Celsius) on Tuesday, making it the hottest September day recorded going back to 1874. Credit: AP Photo/Rick Bowmer



Olof Wood walks across reef-like structures called microbialites, exposed by receding waters at the Great Salt Lake Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2022, near Salt Lake City. A blistering heat wave is breaking records in Utah, where temperatures hit 105 degrees Fahrenheit (40.5 degrees Celsius) on Tuesday. That is the hottest September day recorded going back to 1874. Credit: AP Photo/Rick Bowmer



Great Salt Lake visitor Olof Wood floats on the water at the Great Salt Lake Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2022, near Salt Lake City. A blistering heat wave is breaking records in Utah, where temperatures hit 105 degrees Fahrenheit (40.5 degrees Celsius) on Tuesday. That is the hottest September day recorded going back to 1874. Credit: AP Photo/Rick Bowmer



A couple walks along the receding edge of the water after record low water levels are seen at the Great Salt Lake Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2022, near Salt Lake City. A blistering heat wave is breaking records in Utah, where temperatures hit 105 degrees Fahrenheit (40.5 degrees Celsius) on Tuesday. That is the hottest September day recorded going back to 1874. Credit: AP Photo/Rick Bowmer



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Great Salt Lake visitors Benny and Faith Martens float on the water at the Great Salt Lake Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2022, near Salt Lake City. A blistering heat wave is breaking records in Utah, where temperatures hit 105 degrees Fahrenheit (40.5 degrees Celsius) on Tuesday, making it the hottest September day recorded going back to 1874. Credit: AP Photo/Rick Bowmer



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In state office buildings, thermostats were being set at 85 degrees (29 C) at 5 p.m. to conserve electricity.

Sacramento native Ariana Clark said she couldn't remember it ever being this hot for this long before. She said she turned her air conditioner off in the afternoons to conserve energy and kept her 9-month old son, Benito, cool by filling up a bucket for him to play in outside.

"As long as he's keeping cool that's all that matters," Clark said.

Juliana Hinch, who moved to Sacramento from San Diego 2 1/2 years ago said she has never seen heat like this before. She said some wetlands by her house have mostly dried up, so she leaves water in her front yard "for other random animals," including cats, squirrels and coyotes.

Hinch said she once lived in Washington state but moved away because it was too cold. Now, she said "that sounds like a good problem to have."

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