

Fires continue to blaze across Northern California. More than 135,000 acres burn

September 4 2023, by Alex Muegge, The Sacramento Bee



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East of Crescent City and Eureka, fires that started roughly three weeks ago continue to sear Northern California into September, authorities said.

Five of the largest fires vary in size from around 84,000 acres down to 4,000 acres.

State and federal [fire](#) personnel do not yet know the cause of some blazes, according to first responders.

Fires burn near Crescent City

The Smith River Complex fire in Del Norte County, at 83,974 acres, started during thunderstorms in the area on Aug. 15, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

As of Sunday, the fire is 9% contained.

Nick Hultberg, 28, manages a gas station in Crescent City. He said as of 11 a.m. Sunday, it was a bright and sunny day. However, from Tuesday through Thursday, smoke in the city was so dense "people had trouble getting through."

The Happy Camp Complex fire in Klamath National Forest and the Happy Camp Ranger District, near Scott Bar in Siskiyou County, started around 10:30 a.m. on Aug. 16. It was at 27,625 acres and 53% contained Sunday morning, according to fire personnel.

The fire has killed one person. Nine structures have been destroyed, 336 threatened and two others damaged, authorities said. Twenty people have been evacuated and roughly 1,600 personnel deployed.

Firefighters saw minimal activity on the fire's west side Saturday night due to rain, officials said.

People are prohibited from being on any national forest system grounds within Gasquet, Lower Trinity and Mad River Ranger Districts due to

fire activity from the Smith River and South Fork complex fires, according to a Forest Service closure order issued for Aug. 20 to Sept. 18.

The South Fork Complex in Humboldt County started on Aug. 15, has raged through 3,957 acres and is 35% contained as of Sunday morning, according to fire personnel.

Joe Rosa, spokesman for California Inter-Agency Incident Management Team 14 working to fight fires on behalf of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, said the South Fork fire was originally four fires: the 3-9 fire, the Pilot fire, the Pellitreau fire and the Sulphur fire.

The latter three have been contained, but the 3-9 fire continues, Rosa said. The cause is still under investigation.

Evacuation orders were issued for South Fork Mountain from Board Camp Mountain to the Trinity County line at Henry Ridge and from west of the Trinity County line to include two [forest](#) routes, Salyer Mad River Road and Ridge Road.

A total of 768 personnel, including crews, air support, engines, dozers and water tenders have treated the fire, U.S. Forest Service officials said.

"There has been virtually no fire growth due to the rain in the last 48 hours," said Kurt McCray, Cal Fire spokesman for the Humboldt and Del Norte counties.

Blazes persist closer to Eureka

Fire officials said Sunday the SRF Lightning Complex fire, also in Humboldt County, encompasses 16,478 acres and is 20% contained. It is

roughly 60 miles northeast of Eureka.

The fire began after 11 a.m. on Aug. 20, according to Cal Fire.

One new blaze reportedly started due to lightning in the Bridge Ridge area, and firefighters were extinguishing the single tree fire Sunday morning, authorities said. There are 19 separate fires contributing to its over 16,000-acre total.

Area and campground closures are in effect on portions of Six Rivers National Forest, according to fire personnel.

The Deep Fire in Trinity County blazed 4,192 acres by Sunday morning. It started around 8:30 a.m. on Aug. 16, according to Cal Fire.

"Crews are re-engaging in fire suppression efforts on the fire line after being pulled for firefighter safety during (a) heavy rain event," the U.S. Forest Service said in a statement. "They will seek opportunities to fight the fire directly in the northern flanks of the fire's edge south of Little Salt Creek."

The Deep Fire was 60% contained as of 11:30 a.m. Sunday. The cause is under investigation, according to Cal Fire.

Fire officials are directing evacuation inquiries to the Trinity County Sheriff's Department Facebook page. The most recent evacuation orders were issued Monday morning, though it is unclear if those were still in place.

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