

Ferocious winds fuel blazes throughout Northern California

Required Annotations		Student-Created Annotations		Summary / Questions / Reflection	
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SANTA ROSA, California — With ferocious winds driving multiple wildfires through bone-dry vegetation and nearly 200,000 people ordered to leave their homes, California's governor declared a statewide emergency Sunday, October 27. Meanwhile, millions of residents remained without power after the state's largest utility cut electricity as a precaution to prevent more areas from igniting.

Shifting winds and dry air frustrated efforts Monday to beat back the massive Kincade Fire that's cutting a destructive path through Northern California's wine country. By Tuesday night, the blaze had **engulfed** more than 76,130 acres in Sonoma County, up from 66,200 acres on Monday. Fire officials said they had contained just 15 percent of the blaze. At least 189 structures including homes and businesses have been destroyed by the blaze, officials said. Another 39 structures were damaged and roughly 90,000 structures are still threatened.

High-speed winds were expected to return Tuesday morning into Wednesday afternoon, with gusts reaching 50 miles per hour, again creating conditions that could feed the blaze.

"We're playing both offense and defense right now on two different sides of the fire, and we're going to have to flip-flop that tomorrow when that wind event comes through," Cal Fire Division Chief Jonathan Cox said in a news conference Monday night.

"Red flag" warnings were in place for most of the Bay Area from Tuesday morning through Wednesday afternoon for "critical" fire weather that could allow wildfires to spread rapidly and behave in ways that would make them hard to control.

The Sonoma County Sheriff's Office allowed residents in two evacuation zones west of Santa Rosa to return home, but it warned that they should be prepared to leave again if the fire intensifies. "If conditions change and we do see an increase in weather or fire activity," Sheriff Mark Essick said, "we will have deputies back in those neighborhoods."

Firefighters' primary focus Monday was "aggressive" perimeter control, officials said. Large air tankers and helicopters dropped water and fire **retardant** on the blaze, while crews used fire engines and bulldozers to stop the advancing flames on the ground.

Governor Gavin Newsom said in a statement that officials were deploying "every resource available" to respond to the wildfires, including a large blaze in Northern California's wine country powered by gusts that reached more than 102 miles per hour.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, two grass fires briefly halted traffic on an interstate bridge. The flames came dangerously close to homes in Vallejo. Another grass fire closed a stretch of interstate that cut through the state capital as smoke obstructed drivers.

In the south, a wildfire in the Santa Clarita area near Los Angeles destroyed 22 structures. As of Tuesday night, the Tick Fire was 90 percent contained. The biggest evacuation was in Northern California's Sonoma County where 180,000 people were told to pack up and leave, many in the middle of the night.

Meanwhile, 1.3 million Californians in the Bay Area are without power as state utility giant Pacific Gas & Electric **implemented** a historically large blackout to mitigate the risk of additional fires as high winds whip around the tinder-dry region.

PG&E also cut gas service to more than 20,000 customers "to protect homes from fire," Sonoma officials said.

The utility has faced fierce criticism over its decision to cut power to so many people, including from the governor, who blamed PG&E for failing to keep its electrical systems up to date.

Officials have also raised concerns that the mass outages could be particularly dangerous for hospitals, nursing homes and other facilities that depend on powered medical equipment to care for their patients.

The fear that the winds could blow embers and spread fire across a major highway prompted authorities to expand evacuation orders that covered parts of Santa Rosa, a city of

175,000 that was devastated by a wildfire two years ago.

"This is the largest evacuation that any of us ... can remember," the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office tweeted Sunday. "Take care of each other."

Hundreds of people arrived at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds in Santa Rosa by Sunday. Some came from senior care facilities. More than 300 people slept inside an auditorium filled with cots and wheeled beds. **Scores** of others stayed in a separate building with their pets.

Among them was Maribel Cruz, 19 years old, who packed up her dog, four cats and fish as soon as she was told to flee her trailer in the town of Windsor, about 60 miles (97 kilometers) north of San Francisco. She also grabbed a neighbor's cat.

"I'm just nervous since I grew up in Windsor," she said. "I'm hoping the wind cooperates."

A historic attraction outside Healdsburg was lost Sunday when embers carried by wind sparked a blaze that engulfed the Soda Rock Winery. Buildings included a general store and post office founded in 1869.

In central California, a tree toppled in strong wind Sunday killed a woman and injured a man who was taken to a hospital, officials said.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, gusts knocked over a 30-foot (9-meter) tree at a farmers market in Martinez, injuring nine people, including a toddler. Six people left with injuries that were not life-threatening and were taken to a hospital, police said.

During the 2017 fires, winds up to 90 miles per hour (144 kilometers per hour) lasted for about 12 hours. This time, the gusts were stronger and expected to last more than 36 hours, ending Monday night, said Matt Mehle, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service's Monterey office.

Wind-blown embers could spark fires up to a mile away. Fire officials said they feared that if the Kincade Fire crosses U.S. 101, it could ignite an area that hasn't burned in 80 years.

"The fuel in that area is extremely dense, they're extremely old and dry," said Steve Volmer, a fire behavior analyst with Cal Fire.

The **parched** vegetation from the unseasonably hot weather and low humidity was already igniting spots elsewhere, and firefighters scrambled to keep up.

Two grass fires shut down a 6-mile (10-kilometer) stretch of Interstate 80, including a bridge between the cities of Crockett and Vallejo, and forced the evacuation of 200 people from California State University Maritime Academy. An ember from one fire possibly sparked the other.

Smoke from another grass fire Sunday forced the closure of a stretch of Interstate 80 running through Sacramento's downtown. Meanwhile, fire officials spotted downed power lines in the area of a small fire that destroyed a building at a tennis club and three other structures in Lafayette, a leafy suburb in the east San Francisco Bay Area.

The city of Vallejo said the blackout shut off its pumping station needed to access its well water, prompting an emergency. The city barred residents from watering yards and asked people to limit bathing and flushing toilets, according to the Vallejo Times Herald.

Many residents said they feel **exasperated**.

"It has brought a lot of anxiety," said Cody Rodriguez, 20, who lived for a week at a Santa Rosa shelter during the 2017 fires and checked into a Napa County shelter on Sunday. "I was like, 'I don't want to go through this again.'"

Questions (The questions themselves are online.)

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Questions

1. Read the following two summaries of the article.

Option 1: Wildfires are striking both Northern and Southern California. Buildings are burning and bridges are being shut down. The governor assures residents that fire officials are doing what they can to contain the fires. However, it is little comfort to residents who worry about whether it can be contained.

Option 2: Governor Gavin Newsom has declared a state of emergency in California. Strong winds have caused several wildfires and 200,000 residents have been ordered to evacuate. Structures have been destroyed and power was shut off for millions.

Which option provides an objective, accurate summary of the article, and why?

- a) Option 1; it succinctly states the effects of the wildfires on California and its residents.
 - b) Option 1; it clearly explains the causes of the wildfires and how residents are reacting.
 - c) Option 2; it succinctly states the effects of the wildfires on California and its residents.
 - d) Option 2; it clearly explains the causes of the wildfires and how residents are reacting.
2. Read the following two details from the article.

"We're playing both offense and defense right now on two different sides of the fire, and we're going to have to flip-flop that tomorrow when that wind event comes through," Cal Fire Division Chief Jonathan Cox said in a news conference Monday night.

Firefighters' primary focus Monday was "aggressive" perimeter control, officials said. Large air tankers and helicopters dropped water and fire retardant on the blaze, while crews used fire engines and bulldozers to stop the advancing flames on the ground.

Select the option that BEST explains how these details develop a central idea of the article.

 - a) They both support the idea that the wildfires have led to the largest evacuations in recent memory.
 - b) They both support the idea that residents are frustrated by the constant wildfires in California.
 - c) They both contribute to the idea that the fire is worse than the wildfires that were seen in 2017.
 - d) They both contribute to the idea that authorities are working hard to contain the wildfires and keep people safe.
 3. Which of the following ideas did the author develop the LEAST in this article about the California wildfires?
 - a) the controversy over Pacific Gas & Electric's decision to cut electricity
 - b) the reasons why the wildfires might have been started
 - c) the destruction that the wildfires are causing in parts of California
 - d) the evacuation efforts that are being undertaken
 4. Which of the following accurately summarizes how different groups feel about PG&E's decision to cut power during the wildfires?
 - a) PG&E believes that it is taking the proper precautions to prevent additional fires from spreading. However, the governor criticized the company for not being properly prepared. Other officials point out that the lack of electricity can be life-threatening for some.
 - b) PG&E wants to help stop the spread of wildfires by cutting off power. The governor is applauding the company for being proactive. However, other officials are frustrated with PG&E and its sudden decision that could leave hospitals without power.
 - c) PG&E feared that it would be reprimanded by the governor if it did not shut down the power. The governor supports the decision because it is the safe thing to do. However, other officials worry about what it could mean for residents who have not evacuated yet.
 - d) PG&E was forced to shut down its power because of pressure from residents. The governor strongly disagrees with the decision and thinks it is irresponsible. However, other officials agree with the decision because it will prevent fires from starting elsewhere.