

## Simi Valley fire [Map] contained; Santa Barbara blaze continues

From staff and wire reports

Tuesday, May 28, 2013

### [Map of incident](#)

Ventura County firefighters contained a brush fire in Simi Valley within a few hours Tuesday, keeping it to about 8 acres. Meanwhile, in Santa Barbara County, crews continued to battle the White Fire, which had grown to more than 2,000 acres by midafternoon.

The Simi Valley fire was reported about 11:45 a.m. in the 700 block of Chantry Circle near Assumption Cemetery. It was contained about 2 p.m., officials said.

In Santa Barbara County, firefighters took advantage of a lull in winds Tuesday to try to gain ground on a forest fire in mountains northwest of Santa Barbara. Other crews in Southern California chased a new fire north of Los Angeles and sought to increase containment of a rural San Diego County blaze.

Santa Barbara County fire Capt. David Sadecki said the fast grass fire erupted at 3:25 p.m. Tuesday and rapidly grew from 2 acres to 170 acres, jumping Highways 154 and 246.

Sadecki said dozens of firefighters and two water-dropping helicopters had stopped its forward movement. The blaze was driven by wind gusts up to 50 mph and hot, dry conditions, he said.

The White Fire erupted Monday in Los Padres National Forest, carving its way through 2.8 square miles of dry chaparral, oak and pine. It was 10 percent contained, Sadecki said.

More than 550 firefighters, supported by a dozen aircraft, were on the lines about 10 miles northwest of downtown Santa Barbara.

At the fire's peak, thousands of campers and day visitors left the forest Monday. The fire also prompted the evacuation of about 50 homes, mainly cabins and vacation rentals, but residents were expected to return Tuesday evening.

The fire, which remained under investigation, burned two vehicles and a U.S. Forest Service garage.

Winds were calm through midday Tuesday, and the blaze was moving east along the Santa Ynez Mountains northwest of Santa Barbara.

Crews were concerned, however, that a wind change could push the fire south, Sadecki said.

"It's an out-of-control wildfire so it is a threat. There's a lot of dry vegetation in its path," he said. "It's still spring — it's not even summer — and it's burning like it's August or September."

In Simi Valley, Bill Nash, a spokesman for the Ventura County Fire Department, said weed abatement had helped curb the spread of the blaze but that about 20 homes were threatened in the area. No evacuations were ordered, Nash said.

About 100 firefighters responded to the blaze, Nash said. Simi Valley police helped control traffic.

Capt. Scott Detrorre said the fire was "fast-moving with variable winds that created a potentially dangerous situation. This fire, like the Springs Fire, is another example of the value of our weed abatement program that requires 100 foot clearance," he said. "That clearance gave our firefighters time to get in there and protect the homes."

Dick Martin, 80, of Simi Valley, said he was at the Simi Valley senior center playing bridge when the fire broke out behind his home. He said his daughter, who lives next door, tried to call him but couldn't get through.

As he was leaving the senior center, he stopped at the cemetery to visit his wife's grave and saw smoke on the hillside.

"When I got up here it was already too late for me to get in," Martin said as he saw firetrucks line his cul-de-sac. "I wasn't concerned because there's good clearance around the house," Martin said. As firefighters doused the blaze, Martin stood in his backyard with his camera.

"I've got it all on Facebook," he said.

Kristina Akridge, 32, was getting her car serviced when she heard the firetrucks' sirens in the area. She hurried home when she learned there was a brush fire in the area. She and other residents walked down the hillside in the 800 block of Hemlock Ridge Court to see the blaze better.

"I could see the flames and the dark smoke and feel the spray of water from the helicopter," Akridge said. She said she was a little nervous at first because winds were

expected to pick up.

Drivers were advised to avoid Fitzgerald Road between Hudspeth Avenue and First Street and First Street south of Fitzgerald during the blaze.

Firefighters were called off an earlier fire on Highway 126 in Los Angeles County.

The fire near Magic Mountain was reported about 11:35 a.m. About 55 acres burned on the eastbound side of the highway. The fire was 35 percent contained.

Nash said officials determined that the blaze is a Los Angeles County Fire Department incident and that Ventura County units were canceled early on.

The fire was burning about five miles from the county line, Nash said.

The White Fire was burning near Paradise Road, which meanders along the north side of the Santa Ynez Mountains. Santa Barbara and neighboring communities sit on the other side of the coastal range, which rises from near the Pacific shoreline to peaks topping 3,000 feet.

The area 100 miles northwest of Los Angeles has seen terrible wildfires, including a 1990 blaze that destroyed 641 structures, most of them homes. A fire in summer 2007 erupted July 4 and burned for months.

At the south end of the state, a fire in the wilderness in San Diego County scorched 980 acres of dry brush but was not a threat to homes or buildings.

The blaze southeast of Julian was sparked Sunday and was 70 percent contained. Fire officials were investigating whether it was set intentionally.



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