

Orange County besieged with blazes

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Body

Oct 27, 2020(CalMatters: <https://calmatters.org> Delivered by Newstex) ;;; Good morning, California. It's Tuesday, October 27. Northern California largely sparedPhoto by Jose Carlos Fajardo, Bay Area News Group All things considered, California is faring better than expected amid the worst fire conditions of the season[1]. Though desiccated winds topping 70 miles per hour ignited more than two dozen small fires[2] in the northern part of the state, firefighters had fully contained all but two of them[3] by Monday afternoon, and ongoing fires didn't spread past existing containment lines. But conditions were more dire in Orange County, where the quick-moving Silverado Fire[4] forced 70,000 Irvine residents to evacuate and critically injured two firefighters, and the Blue Ridge Fire[5] forced 20,000 evacuations in Yorba Linda. Much of California remains under a red flag warning today — signifying extreme fire danger — though winds are expected to slow down at lower altitudes.

PG&E began restoring power[6] Monday to some of the customers afflicted by the utility's largest shutoffs of the year[7], though many likely won't see their lights come on until late this evening. The shutoffs also disrupted Comcast service for more than 100,000 Bay Area homes and businesses[8], frustrating parents trying to work from home and kids trying to access online classes. Meanwhile, around 22,000 Southern California Edison customers lost power[9], and another 105,000 face potential shutoffs. The utility said Monday night its equipment may have sparked the Silverado Fire[10]. For many of the 90,000 Californians who abruptly evacuated Monday, it was just the latest traumatic event in a year defined by challenges. Pat McGrath, 78[11]: 'I just panicked. I started crying. I'm cold, I'm hungry, I'm stressed and I don't know what to do.' Stanley Liu, 45[12]: 'We were forced to stay home for months because of the coronavirus, and now we're being forced to leave because of the fire. We didn't want to leave, but it wasn't our decision. We're worried about our safety and our home now.' _____The coronavirus bottom line:As of 9 p.m. Monday night, California had901,010 confirmed coronavirus casesand17,357 deathsfrom the virus, according toaCalMatters tracker[13].Also:CalMatters regularly updates this pandemic timeline tracking thestate's daily actions[14]. And we'retracking the state's coronavirus hospitalizations by county[15].Advertisement<https://mattressrecyclingcouncil.org/programs/california/> Other stories you should know 1. Newsom challenges death penalty Newsom at the CalFire/Cameron Park Fire Station on May 13, 2020. Photo by Rich Pedroncelli, AP Photo/Pool Gov. Gavin Newsom took the unprecedented step Monday of filing a court brief[16] that challenges the state's application of the death penalty — a year after he declared a moratorium on the practice[17]. In the brief[18] to the state Supreme Court, Newsom's lawyers argue that California's 'capital punishment scheme is infected by racism,' pointing out that more than one-third of the 711 inmates on Death Row are Black. To ensure trials aren't impacted by racial bias, Newsom's lawyers say jurors should be required to unanimously agree on the death penalty and the facts of 'disputed aggravating evidence,' such as a person's past violent acts. Newsom[19]: 'Since its inception, the American death penalty has been disproportionately applied, first, to enslaved Africans and African Americans, and later, to free Black people.'Kent Scheidegger of the California

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Justice Legal Foundation[20]: 'The relevant comparison is death row versus the population of murderers, not death row versus the general population.' Also Monday, four district attorneys and two former district attorneys filed a similar brief[21] for the same case — People v. McDaniel — that will soon come before the state Supreme Court. Donte McDaniel was sentenced to death in 2009[22] for murdering two people and attempting to murder two others.

2. The distance learning emergency Image via iStock In yet[23] another[24] indication[25] of the rising anxiety surrounding prolonged distance learning, Sonoma County education leaders are holding an unprecedented 'emergency summit' today, the Press Democrat reports[26]. On the agenda: why high school students are failing classes at never-before-seen rates — and the results of a national survey that showed Sonoma County high schoolers are more concerned about their futures than students elsewhere. Around 71% of Sonoma County high schoolers said 'feeling anxious about the future' was their No. 1 obstacle to distance learning, while a majority of students elsewhere cited 'distractions at home.' The region, recently battered by the Glass Fire[27], also has one of the state's highest coronavirus positivity rates[28] — meaning it will be a while before schools are given the green light to reopen. Healdsburg Unified School District Superintendent Chris Vanden Heuvel: 'It does appear to me that we have got more complex mental health issues and anxieties that we are seeing in our kids right now that is different than in other places. You look at what those kids have gone through for four years — fire after fire[29], pandemic and a flood. It's a lot to process.'

3. Verily testing sites under scrutiny Image via iStock San Francisco and Alameda counties have cut ties with coronavirus testing sites operated by Verily, a Google sister company, amid concerns about patients' data privacy and frustration that people from wealthy ZIP codes were flocking to sites intended to boost testing in low-income Black and Latino neighborhoods, California Healthline reports[30]. In order to obtain a test at a Verily site, patients have to sign up through a Gmail account; share sensitive information, including their home address and health conditions; and agree to a privacy policy permitting that data to be shared with third parties. Many low-income residents were suspicious of the requirements, and some lacked the internet access necessary to sign up. Dr. Margot Kushel of the UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative: 'It turns out that in public health, the highest-tech solution is usually not the right one. The very structure of this is set up to fail. And by failing the communities who need it most, we fail everybody.' California has so far paid Verily \$55 million to run testing sites serving at least 28 counties. The state's top health official, Dr. Mark Ghaly, said the state is working to address privacy concerns and improve testing access. Advertisement <https://www.chcf.org/collection/modernizing-payment-californias-community-health-centers/> CalMatters columnist Dan Walters[31]: The Democratic Party's left wing wants to cancel Dianne Feinstein, who's been a fixture of California politics for six decades and is more interested in policy outcomes than scoring rhetorical points. Both renewables and reliability: Here's how California can diversify its renewable energy portfolio, argues Julia Levin of the Bioenergy Association of California[32]. Renaming state parks: We applaud a new initiative to rename certain state parks to more accurately reflect California's history and diversity, write former California State Park and Recreation commissioners Ernest Chung and Elva Yañez[33]. Other things worth your time Bulldozers were ready to fight California fires. Why did the U.S. Forest Service turn them away? // Sacramento Bee[34]State to allow visitors inside nursing homes in most California counties. // CalMatters[35]How California keeps early votes secret until Election Day. // CalMatters[36]Are Asian Americans in California and elsewhere the last undecided voters? // The New Yorker[37]Podcast: Answering Abigail's proposition questions. // CalMatters/Los Angeles Times[38]How Prop. 16 could reshape higher education campuses across California. // CalMatters/KQED[39]More than half of CSU campuses saw enrollment gains this fall. // EdSource[40]Three CalPERS health care plans are in a 'death spiral.' Saving them could involve price hikes. // Sacramento Bee[41]Five years after Aliso Canyon gas leak, public health study is at the heart of tug-of-war. // Los Angeles Daily News[42]See you tomorrow.Tips, insight or feedback? Email emily@calmatters.org [43].;Follow me on Twitter: [@emily_hoeven](https://twitter.com/emily_hoeven)[44]Subscribe to CalMatters newslettershere[45].Follow CalMatters onFacebook[46]andTwitter[47].CalMatters is now available in Spanish onTwitter[48],Facebook[49]andRSS[50]. [1]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/10/california-fires-diablo-winds-pge-shutoffs/> [2]: <https://www.sfchronicle.com/california-wildfires/article/Bay-Area-avoids-new-major-fires-overnight-but-15674983.php> [3]: <https://fire.ca.gov/daily-wildfire-report/> [4]: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-10-26/silverado-fire-ignites-in-orange-county> [5]: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-10-26/brush-fire-near-corona-evacuations-yorba-linda> [6]: <http://investor.pgecorp.com/news-events/press-releases/press-release-details/2020/PGE-Begins-Issuing-Weather-All-Clear-in-Some-Locations-for-Public-Safety-Power-Shutoff-Event/default.aspx> [7]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/10/california-fires-diablo-winds-pge-shutoffs/> [8]: <https://www.sfchronicle.com/business/article/Comcast-outages-leave-more-than-100-000-Bay-Area-15676574.php> [

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9]: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-10-26/silverado-fire-ignites-in-orange-county> [10]:
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