

The most dangerous fire conditions yet

Newstex Blogs

CalMatters

October 26, 2020 Monday 2:35 PM EST

Copyright 2020 Newstex LLC All Rights Reserved

Length: 2220 words

Byline: Emily Hoeven

Body

Oct 26, 2020(CalMatters: <https://calmatters.org> Delivered by Newstex) ;;; Good morning, California. It's Monday, October 26. Wind, wind, windImage via iStock Brace yourself for the most dangerous fire weather of the season — and prepare to light a lot of candles. Nearly 1 million Californians will spend the day without power after PG&E initiated its largest shutoffs of the year[1] Sunday to mitigate fire risk as bone-dry winds reaching 70 miles per hour pummel Northern California. Meanwhile, Santa Ana winds[2] of up to 80 miles per hour are slamming Southern California, prompting Southern California Edison to warn 71,000 customers could lose power[3]. It's the latest superlative in a fire season that has already set record books ablaze[4]. Wildfires have burned over 4.1 million acres this year — more than double California's previous record — and August and September spawned five of the six largest fires in state history[5]. Meanwhile, at least seven new fires[6] ignited in Shasta County over the weekend, and officials expressed concern that gusty winds could exacerbate the 20 major wildfires[7] still raging across the state. Today, PG&E will provide a federal judge with more information[8] about the role its equipment may have played in sparking the deadly Zogg Fire[9]. A lot is on the line for the utility, which recently pled guilty to 84 counts of involuntary manslaughter[10] in the 2018 Camp Fire and emerged from bankruptcy incurred by billions of dollars in wildfire-related liability costs[11]. A report released last week by PG&E's court-appointed investigator[12] found that the utility's vegetation-management policies — intended to prevent trees from crashing into power lines and sparking fires — have regressed since 2019. _____ The coronavirus bottom line: As of 9 p.m. Sunday night, California had 898,029 confirmed coronavirus cases and 17,345 deaths from the virus, according to a CalMatters tracker[13]. Also: CalMatters regularly updates this pandemic timeline tracking the state's daily actions[14]. And we're tracking the state's coronavirus hospitalizations by county[15]. Advertisement

<https://mattressrecyclingcouncil.org/programs/california/> Other stories you should know 1. California's early turnout heavily Democratic Image via iStock California Democrats are voting early at much higher rates than Republicans or independents, inverting voting patterns seen in past elections, CalMatters' Dylan Svoboda reports[16]. As of Sunday, 35% of Democrat voters had turned in their ballots, compared to 26% of Republicans and 24% of independents, according to Political Data Inc[17]. Election experts attribute the change to President Donald Trump casting aspersions on voting by mail[18], which has long been a mainstay of Republican turnout[19]. As a result, California campaigns counting on GOP votes are embarking on a longer outreach effort than usual. Matt Rexroad, a Republican campaign consultant[20]: 'Usually, the Republicans vote early and then the Democrats trickle in. This time we have much longer lists of Republicans that we are calling to encourage them to make sure they know where and how to vote on Election Day.' 2. Next stage of Exide cleanup The closed Exide factory in Vernon on April 5, 2017. Photo by Danny Moloshok, REUTERS via Alamy How effectively has California overseen the cleanup of Exide's shuttered battery-recycling plant in Los Angeles, the site of the largest toxic contamination in state history[21]? We'll know more Tuesday, when the state auditor releases a report analyzing the Department of Toxic

The most dangerous fire conditions yet

Substances Control's efforts[22]. The department announced Friday[23] that it had agreed — against its wishes — to allow a court-approved trustee to take over the contaminated site. A federal judge last week gave Exide the green light to abandon the site on Oct. 30[24]. The trustee will handle cleanup efforts and selling or leasing the land, though DTSC will maintain an oversight role, the Los Angeles Daily News reports[25]. Although cleanup costs could reach \$100 million, only \$30 million is available for the trust — raising questions about who will shoulder the remaining cost. Taxpayers have already spent \$270 million[26] on remediation efforts.

3. Newsom ousts water board member ahead of controversial vote A seawater desalination plant. Image via iStock When a regional water board votes on a controversial seawater desalination plant later this year, one of the project's most outspoken critics won't be there to weigh in. Gov. Gavin Newsom announced Wednesday[27] that he was replacing William von Blasingame on the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board with Tustin City Councilmember Letitia Clark — raising concerns among environmentalists[28] that the governor did so at the behest of Poseidon Water[29], the company proposing the Orange County desalination project. Poseidon has spent \$614,500 this year lobbying Sacramento on water policy, the Voice of OC reports[30]. The governor's office did not respond to a request for comment Sunday. Opponents of the desalination project[31] say it will quintuple water rates, harm marine life and cause environmental damage to nearby neighborhoods, which are predominantly working-class and Latino. Proponents say[32] it will help local communities avoid a water shortage while creating new jobs. The desalination debate is ongoing across the state — last month, a water company withdrew its application for a plant in the Monterey Bay town of Marina[33] amid concerns about its impact on underserved communities.

Advertisement <https://www.chcf.org/collection/modernizing-payment-californias-community-health-centers/>

CalMatters columnist Dan Walters[34]: California has a new financial regulatory regime with broad powers — but its reach remains vague. Forgotten nonprofits: California must establish pandemic policies for nonprofits, including contract flexibility, relief programs and access to COVID-19 funding, argues Jan Masaoka, CEO of the California Association of Nonprofits[35]. Helping renters: Berkeley and Oakland are working on a first-in-the-state policy to preserve affordable housing, write Hewot Shankute and Seema Rupani of the East Bay Community Law Center[36]. Local challenges: The success of a state groundwater bill depends entirely on local implementation, argues Burnell Blanchard of Searles Valley Minerals[37]. Other things worth your time UCSD graduate Kate Robbins votes from space station. // San Diego Union-Tribune[38] Snippy over Trump-Biden, California voters unload in hair salons, barbershops. // Mercury News[39] Resistance to Newsom's lockdown orders reach new high in California's 'State of Jefferson.' // Sacramento Bee[40] How San Francisco became California's first urban center to enter the least restrictive reopening tier. // Los Angeles Times[41] 'Money was made fast and furiously': The FBI probe into Borrego Health in Riverside County. // San Diego Union-Tribune[42] Behind the battle for the future of California's oil. // KQED[43] How Los Angeles' coast became a DDT dumping ground. // Los Angeles Times[44] Los Angeles expecting another record year for hate crimes. // Crosstown LA[45] CSU graduation rates show steady improvement amid pandemic. // EdSource[46] Thousands of Fresno students chronically absent as schools weigh return to classrooms. // Fresno Bee[47] See you tomorrow. Tips, insight or feedback? Email emily@calmatters.org [48]; Follow me on Twitter: [@emily_hoeven](https://twitter.com/emily_hoeven) [49] Subscribe to CalMatters newsletters here [50]. Follow CalMatters on Facebook [51] and Twitter [52]. CalMatters is now available in Spanish on Twitter [53], Facebook [54] and RSS [55]. [1]: <http://investor.pgecorp.com/news-events/press-releases/press-release-details/2020/Due-to-Highest-Winds-and-Driest-Conditions-of-the-Season-PGE-Will-Turn-Off-Power-for-Safety-to-Approximately-361000-Customers-in-Targeted-Parts-of-36-Counties-and-17-Tribal-Communities/default.aspx> [2]: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-10-24/santa-anas-will-raise-red-flags-on-land-and-waves-in-coastal-waters> [3]: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-10-25/los-angeles-county-emergency-officials-warn-of-fire-conditions-in-the-coming-days> [4]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/10/california-fires-record-4-million-acres/> [5]: https://www.fire.ca.gov/media/11416/top20_acres.pdf [6]: <https://www.sfchronicle.com/california-wildfires/article/California-fires-live-updates-Bay-Area-braces-15648402.php> [7]: <https://fire.ca.gov/daily-wildfire-report/> [8]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/10/california-ballot-harvesting-dropoff-boxes/> [9]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/10/pge-zogg-fire-investigation/> [10]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/03/california-coronavirus-state-parks-hospital-beds-surge/> [11]: <https://calmatters.org/environment/california-wildfires/2020/03/california-pge-bankruptcy-gavin-newsom-deal/> [12]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/10/newsom-sued-fracking-permits/> [13]: <https://calmatters.org/health/coronavirus/2020/03/california-coronavirus-by-the-numbers-cases-testing-masks-hospital-beds/> [14]: <https://calmatters.org/health/coronavirus/2020/04/gavin-newsom-coronavirus-updates-timeline/> [15]: <https://calmatters.org/health/coronavirus/2020/04/california-coronavirus-covid-patient-hospitalization-data-icu/>

The most dangerous fire conditions yet

[16]: <https://calmatters.org/politics/votebeat/2020/10/california-democrats-early-voter-turnout/> [17]: <https://www.politicaldata.com/2020-ballot-retained-tracker-state/> [18]: <https://calmatters.org/politics/california-election-2020/2020/08/trump-post-office-california/> [19]: <https://www.politico.com/states/california/story/2020/10/23/california-republicans-face-turnout-burden-after-trump-mail-ballot-attacks-1330107> [20]: <https://www.politico.com/states/california/story/2020/10/23/california-republicans-face-turnout-burden-after-trump-mail-ballot-attacks-1330107> [21]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/10/california-federal-stimulus-census-exide/> [22]: <http://www.auditor.ca.gov/pdfs/analyses/2020-107.pdf> [23]: <https://dtsc.ca.gov/2020/10/23/dtsc-statement-on-its-agreement-to-the-exide-vernon-environmental-response-trust/> [24]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/10/california-prop-15-prop-20-prop-16/> [25]: <https://www.dailynews.com/2020/10/24/contaminated-exide-plant-turned-over-to-state-environmental-trust/> [26]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/10/trump-federal-stimulus-california/> [27]: <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/10/21/governor-newsom-announces-appointments-10-21-20/> [28]: <https://voiceofoc.org/2020/10/gov-newsom-ousts-key-poseidon-desal-critic-from-water-board-ahead-of-projects-approval/> [29]: <https://voiceofoc.org/2020/09/will-gov-newsom-replace-poseidon-desal-project-critic-on-oc-regional-water-board/> [30]: <https://voiceofoc.org/2020/10/gov-newsom-ousts-key-poseidon-desal-critic-from-water-board-ahead-of-projects-approval/> [31]: <https://calmatters.org/commentary/my-turn/2020/10/orange-county-desalination-project-doesnt-pencil-out/> [32]: <https://calmatters.org/commentary/my-turn/2020/10/desalination-plant-in-orange-county-will-help-ensure-clean-drinking-water/> [33]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/09/newsom-expands-worker-protections/> [34]: <https://calmatters.org/commentary/2020/10/california-finance-banks-regulation-dodd-frank/> [35]: <https://calmatters.org/?p=145629> [36]: <https://calmatters.org/?p=146198> [37]: <https://calmatters.org/commentary/my-turn/2020/10/heres-the-challenge-of-implementing-historic-groundwater-law/> [38]: <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/science/story/2020-10-25/uc-san-diego-graduate-kate-rubins-casts-her-election-ballot-from-space-station> [39]: <https://www.mercurynews.com/2020/10/25/snippy-over-trump-biden-california-voters-unload-in-hair-salons-barbershops/> [40]: <https://www.sacbee.com/news/california/article246652603.html> [41]: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-10-25/san-francisco-slow-coronavirus-reopening> [42]: <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/watchdog/story/2020-10-25/money-was-made-fast-and-furiously-the-fbi-probe-into-borrego-health> [43]: <https://www.kqed.org/news/11841676/behind-the-battle-for-the-future-of-californias-oil> [44]: <https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-coast-ddt-dumping-ground/> [45]: <https://xtown.la/2020/10/23/hate-crime-los-angeles-record/> [46]: <https://edsources.org/2020/csu-graduation-rates-show-steady-improvement-amid-pandemic/641984> [47]: <https://www.fresnobee.com/news/local/education-lab/article246628973.html> [48]: emily@calmatters.org [49]: <https://calmatters.us11.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5f4af3af825368013c58e4547&id=fdbf3734c1&e=8df3ed9f4c> [50]: <https://calmatters.us11.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5f4af3af825368013c58e4547&id=2a7ce24a72&e=8df3ed9f4c> [51]: <https://calmatters.us11.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5f4af3af825368013c58e4547&id=9b9a39b357&e=8df3ed9f4c> [52]: <https://calmatters.us11.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5f4af3af825368013c58e4547&id=ad27afd972&e=8df3ed9f4c> [53]: https://twitter.com/calmatters_es [54]: <https://www.facebook.com/calmatterses> [55]: <https://calmatters.org/category/calmatters-en-espanol/>

Load-Date: October 26, 2020