



A WOMAN RUNS and drivers leave town Tuesday as the Thompson fire burns in Oroville, Calif. A Cal Fire official said some residents who lost homes to the 2018 Camp blaze were being asked to evacuate once again.

# Some staying as fire spreads

When authorities ordered Brian Wong and his neighbors to evacuate as the Thompson fire bore down on the city of Oroville this week, the restaurant owner knew he couldn't leave.

He had learned from the 2018 Camp fire how things can go wrong for people who can't defend their property, he said.

Oroville is about 20 miles south of Paradise, where the deadliest wildfire in California history killed 85 people and destroyed the Butte County town.

"In the past I wouldn't hesitate to leave, but I'm hearing a lot of stories about fire victims that were not taken care of in Paradise," the 53-year-old said. "I'm afraid of leaving my house, leaving my property, and next thing it burns and we get into a complicated mess.

"I'm choosing to stay behind and defend my property if I need to," he added.

As of Wednesday, more than 28,000 Butte County

While 28,000 in Butte County are under evacuation orders, one says Oroville residents 'have been through this numerous times'

BY MELODY GUTIERREZ, BRITTNY MEJIA, JIREH DENG AND SUMMER LIN

REPORTING FROM OROVILLE, CALIF.



NINE fires ignited in Northern California on Tuesday. The Thompson is the largest at over 3,500 acres.

residents were under evacuation orders. The Thompson fire had grown to more than 3,500 acres with 0% containment. Four homes had been destroyed and thousands of structures were under threat, according to Rick Carhart, a public information officer with Cal Fire's Butte County station.

Carhart said a number of evacuees who lost their homes in the Camp fire were being forced to flee once more.

Crews battled the blaze — one of several that broke out across the state this week — under excessive heat and red flag warnings. Temperatures were forecast to reach 108 degrees Wednesday, with wind gusts of 15 to 20 mph.

Much of Northern California remains under a red flag warning, an alert for extreme fire weather. A combination of winds up to 30 mph, low humidity and hot temperatures "can contribute," he said.

# Debate disaster places Harris in delicate position

The vice president is unbending in her support for Biden, but she needs to guard her place as next in line.

BY NOAH BIERMAN AND HANNAH WILEY

WASHINGTON — Vice President Kamala Harris wouldn't bite.

"Joe Biden is our nominee," she told a CBS News reporter outside a San Francisco fundraiser Tuesday night amid signs the president's Democratic dam was breaking.

The reporter tried another tactic, asking whether she was ready to lead the country if needed. Nothing.

"I am proud to be Joe Biden's running mate," she replied.

In the week since Biden's disastrous debate performance, Harris has received more attention than at any time since her early, rocky days as his No. 2. Polls and party infrastructure give her an advantage over other possible Biden replacements, should he choose to step out of the race against former President Trump.

But Harris is in a delicate position — a magnified version of the political pressure she has faced throughout her tenure in office. She can't afford to show even a hint that she is looking to replace Biden, the oldest U.S. president at 81. Yet she has to watch her back, to make sure others do not usurp her in the event Biden's job becomes available.

"She absolutely, positively has to dance with the one who brought her, and any daylight that she shows between herself and the only person on Earth who could be called her boss would be seen as disloyal," said one former advisor, who requested anonymity to avoid angering fellow Democrats

with succession talk. "If ground keeps shifting ... inevitably she's going to be put in a position of potentially having to make a decision or maybe a decision's being made for her."

So far, she's been earning relatively good marks from Democrats appreciative of her attempts to defend Biden, while Republicans continue to mock her public speeches as word salads.

"It's been interesting to watch people who have been critical of her over the last 3½ years say, 'Oh, I'd support her,'" said an ally who is in regular contact with Harris' and Biden's inner circles, who asked for anonymity to avoid upsetting friends in Biden's orbit.

"People believe, and have always believed, she can prosecute the case."

Harris went on CNN within minutes of last week's debate, when most Democrats were still shell-shocked, offering the first version of Biden's defense. She acknowledged what she called a "slow start" while insisting, "I'm not going to spend all night with you talking about the last 90 minutes when I've been watching the last 3½ years."

Harris has made a similar case since then, traveling to speeches and fundraisers, [See Harris, A5]

# Boxer is giving Biden a deadline

MARK Z. BARABAK

When Barbara Boxer arrived in the U.S. Senate, her image as a fiery liberal from Marin County — land of crystals, hot tubs and aging hippies — preceded her. It was not a good thing.

"The word was that I was this very militant feminist and the guys were frightened to death," Boxer recalled.

The colleague who smoothed her path — "She's good people," he assured the Old Bulls — was Joe Biden, who by 1993 was already starting his third decade on Capitol Hill.

The two grew close, personally and politically.

"We really bonded on protecting dolphins and protecting women," Boxer said of their legislative work (regulating purse seine nets, cracking down on domestic violence), which had begun in the 1980s when she was in the House.

Boxer endorsed Biden when he ran for president in 1988 and again in 2020, notably passing over the Democrat who replaced her in the Senate, Kamala Harris.

Given all that, Boxer was slack-jawed as she and family members watched Biden mumble and bumble his way through his disastrous debate performance last week. "This wasn't the Joe we knew," she said. "Something was off."

Instantly, what had been a persistent, low-grade nervousness among Democrats turned into a full-fledged party freak-out. A small but growing chorus [See Barabak, A5]



ANGEL CITY FC now values itself at \$300 million after being started four years ago, according to a report. Above, Angel City's Gisele Thompson fights for the ball.

# Women's sports getting big boost with power couple buying into Angel City

BY KEVIN BAXTER

Walt Disney Co. chief executive Bob Iger and his wife, Willow Bay, dean of the USC Annenberg School of Journalism, are close to completing a deal in which they

would invest \$250 million in Angel City FC, nearly doubling the value of the most valuable women's sports franchise in the world.

Dylan Byers of the news website Puck was first to report on the negotiations, which were confirmed to

The Times by two people with knowledge of the investment but who are not authorized to speak about it on the record. The transaction could be completed quickly, with Bay and Iger replacing Reddit co-founder [See Angel City, A7]

# Paramount-Skydance deal is back on track. What happened?

After mogul nixes proposed sale, tech scion comes back with a sweetened offer for the Redstone family.

BY MEG JAMES

A storied movie studio and broadcast network are poised for a generational change of the guard that could dramatically reshape the entertainment business.

Shari Redstone and her family on Tuesday accepted tech scion David Ellison's proposed \$2.4-billion purchase of their investment firm, National Amusements Inc., commonly known as NAI, which owns the controlling shares of beleaguered media company Paramount Global.

The Redstone family submitted the offer from

Ellison's Skydance Media to Paramount's special board committee, which now must accept or reject it. The struggling media giant owns CBS, the Paramount Pictures film studio and cable channels MTV, Nickelodeon and Comedy Central.

On Wednesday, Paramount board members began evaluating the offer, a version of which they came close to approving three weeks ago before Redstone got cold feet and called off the talks. Now the question hangs over the company: Is the deal for real this time, and what happens once it closes?

"It's feeling a lot like Groundhog Day," analyst Jamie Lumley of research firm Third Bridge said in an emailed statement. "Renewed hope that both parties will be able to get a deal over the line is being tempered by concerns that

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