



MORE THAN 100 firefighters battled the blaze in the Central-Alameda area. Three people were injured, and 17 were left homeless.

# Massive fire sweeps South L.A. city block in ‘a blink of an eye’

5 homes are destroyed after early morning blaze spreads from construction site

By NATHAN SOLIS, IRFAN KHAN, ASHLEY AHN AND KAREN GARCIA

Some woke to the sounds of screams, others to the glow of a massive fire burning outside their bedroom windows.

It was just before 3:30 a.m. Tuesday as the flames swept over multiple homes in South Los Angeles, forcing people to flee with their loved ones wrapped in blankets and others cradling pets. Even down the street, neighbors could feel the intense heat.

Soon, a fire the size of a city block was burning in the heart of South Los Angeles, destroying five homes and damaging two others. Three people were hurt, and 17 were left homeless.

The size of the fire — and how quickly it ripped through the working-class neighborhood — stunned residents and sparked an extensive investigation into the cause.

More than 100 firefighters battled the fire in the 1500 block of East Vernon Avenue in Central-Alameda, which tore through an apartment building under construction and quickly spread to nearby homes, ac-

ording to the Los Angeles Fire Department.

Arson investigators were on the scene as part of the city’s protocol for structure fires, the cause of the fire is under investigation, and it’s unclear when authorities will make a determination, LAFD spokesperson Margaret Stewart said. The blaze tore quickly through the open-sided wooden frame of the building under construction.

“When you have a building that’s in the framing stages, it’s going to burn hot and fast because you have all of the wood exposed and nothing

## Day laborers recount strange stories

After workers were hired to dump bags of body parts, others recall atypical jobs.

By BRITTNY MEJIA

They were not what you’d call the usual day laborer gigs.

No yardwork. No installing doors. No laying down roof tiles on a hot summer day.

There was the guy who paid several workers to stand in line for concert tickets. The one who wanted to hire a few men to just sit around with him, drink and watch some porn. And then there was the company that contracted day laborers to clean a former brothel, complete with a stripper pole, used needles and the scent of a dead body.

These stories, recounted by laborers and organizers in Los Angeles County in recent days, don’t come close to the experience of four workers recently hired to dump trash bags picked up in Tarzana. First they were told the bags contained rocks. Then Halloween decorations. They quickly realized the heavy, squishy bags were filled with dismembered body parts.

As long as men and women in difficult straits have waited for work on street corners and outside home improvement stores, some have inevitably been hired to perform questionable, exploitative or just plain weird tasks.

“We know that all of us run the same risk,” said Cesar Beiza, 59, who has worked as a day laborer for seven years. “When we go out to work we don’t know what we’re exposing ourselves to.”

On a recent weekday morning, as the sun began to tinge the sky blue, about a dozen day laborers gathered at the Pasadena Community Job Center.

The men — in blue jeans and paint-spattered work boots — sipped Winchell’s coffee as they waited for the raffle that would determine the order in which they’d be offered jobs.

“*Rifa, rifa*,” Juan Dominguez called out at 6:15 a.m., shaking a can with yellow

CHARLES MUNGER, 1924 - 2023

## A wise, influential partner at Berkshire Hathaway

By TOM PETRUNO

Charles Munger helped build one of the greatest fortunes in U.S. history, but he often explained his success in terms that sounded deceptively un-

complicated: “Take a simple idea and take it seriously.” “Load up on the very few insights you have instead of pretending to know everything about everything at all times.” And above all, he stressed the need for pa-

tience and a long-term investment view — an approach that has vanished from much of Wall Street.

In his trademark curmudgeonly style, Munger advised investors to take stakes in a relative handful of great companies and then “just sit on your ass.”

Munger, the longtime investment partner of billionaire Warren E. Buffett, died Tuesday at a California hospital, according to Berkshire Hathaway, where he was vice chairman. He was 99.

“Berkshire Hathaway could not have been built to its present status without

Charlie’s inspiration, wisdom and participation,” Buffett said in a news release. Though born in Omaha, like Buffett, Munger lived in Los Angeles most of his life. And for the most part, he shunned the media spotlight that Buffett often



JOHN DALTON was placed temporarily in a 19th century home built to resemble a Gothic castle after he lost his job and apartment in Edinburgh, Scotland.

## Not just castles in the air in Scotland

Scottish law ensures the right to housing, a concept supported by many in California.

By NOAH BIERMAN

EDINBURGH, Scotland — A few days after John Dalton declared himself homeless, the Scottish government moved him into Muirhouse Mansion, a 19th century stone home built to resemble a Gothic castle. From his private bedroom, No. 16, he could see an island monastery in the Firth of Forth, an estuary that drains into the North Sea.

“I thought, ‘Yeah, this is a bit unusual for homeless accommodations,’” Dalton said as he showed off the property on a crisp fall

morning.

Not every homeless person in Scotland lives in a castle. But Scotland has what some California politicians and advocates have long sought: a legal right to housing. Because of that policy, the local government here must act quickly to ensure people at risk of becoming homeless find a temporary place to stay — even if that place happens to look like a Harry Potter stage set.

Two and a half years since he lost his job, and then ran out of couches to crash on, Dalton, 39, has yet to find a permanent home. But he has had a warm and safe bed — and even another stint on the grounds of a second castle — and has not spent a single night on the street, or “rough sleeping,” as it’s known here.

**More captives freed on 5th day**

Mediators seek to extend the Israel-Hamas truce as the pause in fighting nears its end. **WORLD, A3**

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Memorial is attended by her husband, 99, other presidents and all living U.S. first ladies. **NATION, A4**

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Quarterback focuses on the little things even as big-picture questions loom about the NFL. **SPORTS, B10**

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