

WINE COUNTRY FIRES

Timeline of the blazes

9:20 p.m. Sunday

First reports of a fire in Napa County. The Atlas Fire breaks out near Atlas Peak Road and tears through a famed wine-growing area northeast of the city of Napa and the Silverado Trail.

1 a.m. Monday

Flames tear through the North Bay. Fires, causing power failures and blanketing much of the Bay Area in smoke, are fanned by dry northeast winds that gust up to 50 mph in the valleys and 70 mph on mountain tops.

2 a.m.

Police report the fire has jumped Highway 12 east of Sonoma and multiple jurisdictions battle a blaze west of Hopper Avenue. Evacuations are ordered for that area. In the Kenwood area, near Highway 12 east of Santa Rosa, evacuations are ordered along Porter Creek, Petrified Forest, Franz Valley and Mountain Home Ranch roads.

3 a.m.

In Mendocino County, authorities evacuate some residents while fighting the Redwood Fire, which had burned 4,500 acres north of Highway 20 and west of Mendocino National Forest. In Marin County, officials say a grass fire closed part of Highway 37.

3:45 a.m.

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4:30 a.m.

Emergency dispatchers are overwhelmed by 911 calls from residents smelling smoke.

5 a.m.

Schools are declared closed for the day in several cities, including Napa, Santa Rosa and Petaluma.

7:57 a.m.

Dave Shew, a staff chief with Cal Fire, calls the Atlas Fire northeast of Napa "an incredibly fast-moving and dynamic fire" that is likely to burn into Solano County. The fire has reached the Silverado Country Club and across Highway 128.

8:39 a.m.

The Tubbs Fire, stretching from the north side of Santa Rosa northeast to Calistoga, is the largest of several blazes burning in the North Bay, consuming 20,000 acres overnight. The Atlas Fire off Atlas Peak Road has burned 5,000 acres. Three other fires in Napa, Sonoma and Mendocino counties have burned nearly 5,000 acres.

9 a.m.

Gov. Jerry Brown declares a state of emergency for Napa, Sonoma and Yuba counties.

9:30 a.m.

Napa County officials say they are working to contain the county's three wild fires. Napa Fire Chief Barry Biermann says at least 50 structures have been destroyed. At least 100 homes in Napa are evacuated.

10:45 a.m.

California Highway Patrol helicopters airlift more than two dozen people from high-elevation vineyards, officials say.

11:30 a.m.

A death is reported in Mendocino, as one person is killed in a structure fire.

11:50 a.m.

Fourteen major fires are burning in eight Northern California counties, with 1,500 homes and commercial facilities destroyed and an estimated 73,000 acres burned. An estimated 20,000 people have been evacuated.

12:15 p.m.

More than 100 fire victims are treated at major hospitals in Napa and Sonoma counties for injuries including burns and smoke inhalation.

2:20 p.m.

Evacuation recommendations spread east, including to portions of Solano County.

3:55 p.m.

Officials announce schools will be closed Tuesday, including Mendocino College, Ukiah Unified School District and schools in Willits.

4:10 p.m.

Death toll rises to 10.

— Chronicle staff report

SANTA ROSA'S STREETS IN RUINS

Neighborhoods from page A1

ment, said officers had done the best they could to warn residents as the fire rushed toward them.

"Law enforcement on the P.A. system, sirens blaring, telling everybody to get out — that was pretty effective," he said.

Still, some Coffey Park residents said they never got an alert on their phones or any official evacuation notice. Many were awakened by the smell, others by neighbors banging on their door or car horns on the street.

Tim Ross got a call from a friend saying there was a fire. He decided to shower and shave and then head out. When he saw burning embers floating past the bathroom window, he decided to skip the shave.

"Why was there no alert?" he asked. He's gotten emergency weather and Amber Alerts in the past, he said, but this time nothing. He was angry.

Ross' house was spared, one of only a handful in the area. He sat on his stoop and looked out at the barren, surreal neighborhood of nothing.

"I just don't have any words for it," he said. Elsewhere in Santa Rosa, hundreds of homes and businesses are gone. Officials don't know exactly how many. They're still doing the counting.

East of Coffey Park, scores of upscale homes in the Fountaingrove neighborhood east of the inn are gone. So are homes around Piner Road.

Two Santa Rosa mobile home parks, a furniture store and a gun store were among the structures that are no more.

A man left with his hotel and a motel, the Fountaingrove Inn, the Hilton Sonoma Wine Country hotel and the Best Value Inn and Suites, where hundreds of rooms were reduced to charred heaps.

On Sunday, the Fountaingrove website said it was the "perfect home away from home." On Monday, the Fountaingrove website said the hotel was "unable to conduct business in any capacity."

Not far away, the fire claimed three restaurants and a market. They were among hundreds of homes and businesses obliterated by the fire, some swaying through the North Bay and elsewhere in Northern California.

Residents who went to sleep Sunday night woke up a few hours later to the smell of smoke or the sound of neighbor's or cops banging on the door. Some had only moments to flee with whatever they could grab.

"We barely got out," said Eduardo Flores, 66, who fled the Journey's End Mobile Home Park with his wife, Emily, and their two dogs.

Todd Trask just stared. His house was gone, as was every neighbor's home as far as he could see. House after house. Block after block. All looked like they belonged somewhere besides Earth.

On the ground were frozen rivers of metal that used to be cars.

Trask left at 1:30 a.m. as neighbors woke them with honking and yelling, thinking evacuating was just a precaution. He left thinking it would be hard to get the smell of smoke out of his home when he got back.

Instead, the smoke was all there was.

On Monday afternoon, he mourned the photos, the mementos and personal items. All gone. He had saved his dog. Also his bicycles, his computer and a basket of clothes from the laundry. He left behind a Salvador Dalí etching of a horse. It had been on the wall. The etching is gone, along with the wall.

Paul Lowenthal, spokesman for the Santa Rosa Fire Department,



Mason Trinca / Special to The Chronicle



The Tubbs Fire destroyed part of Cardinal Newman High School, a 53-year-old Catholic school off Old Redwood Highway north of the devastated Fountaingrove neighborhood.

his dog, Rosy, ahead of a wall of flame that destroyed his home. "I got up, smelled smoke in the bedroom, stepped outside and realized it was time to go," he said. "The whole park was on fire. We were driving out over burning branches."

The fire knocked down trees and sent burning branches onto the ground. It knocked down power poles and left a tangle of dangerous wires on the ground. In the 800 block of Piner Road, it consumed a firearms store, its glass shattered.



Top: Firefighters battle flames on Baird Road in Santa Rosa. Above: Chairs and an umbrella are charred and melted beside the pool at Journey's End mobile home park after the Tubbs Fire tore through the neighborhood on Mendocino Avenue.

caused ammunition to explode with loud pops.

It appeared that the Schmidt Firearms store was a total loss, along with the adjoining furniture store 2000 block of Hopper Avenue, a mobile home park.

Andy Lahiji, the owner of the Furniture 2000 store, stood and watched as firefighters fought a losing battle to save the structures, including a furniture warehouse.

"I had \$300,000 in inventory in the warehouse," he said.

He also gazed at the remains of his large panel truck, reduced to a blackened hull.

About 3 miles north of downtown Santa Rosa, the fire destroyed Arby's and Applebee's restaurants in the 800 block of Hopper Avenue, along with buildings for the local post office, a dentist and a McDonald's restaurant, next to a nearby Chevron gas station. The Best Value Inn and Suites at 866 Hopper Ave. was fully involved.

But next door to the engulfed buildings, a Taco Bell, a Kohl's store and a Public Storage facility were largely undamaged.

Black smoke filled the sky, obstructing visibility and making breathing difficult. Hundreds of firefighters were on the scene.

The burning buildings were too far gone to save, and firefighters were unable to do anything to attempt to keep the flames from spreading.

Homeowners told similar stories of frantic dashes to safety and of a fire that picked and chose the houses to destroy.

Jerome Johnson, 55, a resident of the 200 block of Northfield Drive in Santa Rosa, said he woke up to smoke and fire. He and his wife, Melissa, loaded their cat, Jazz, into the car and tried to drive to safety.

"The street was packed with cars," he said. "I thought, 'How the hell are we going to get out?' The fire was getting pretty dangerous. I thought we'd better walk."

The Johnsons parked the car and walked to the emergency shelter at the Finley Community Center, carrying Jazz.

"You could see the wall of flames and hear the explosions," he said.

Not far away, in the Hidden Valley area of Santa Rosa, residents said the flames and smoke came upon them equally fast.

Bob Ochs, the retired chief probation officer for Sonoma County, who lives a few steps from the mandatory evacuation area, said he awoke in the middle of the night to a neighbor and began packing his belongings and water down his house, including a pile of ornamental bamboo plants he had just cut down that weren't ornamental any more, but kindling.

"You try to do whatever you can," he said.

Ochs said he was staying put, for now, and that his house was OK, for now. Anyway, he said, traffic was at a standstill, and roads were closed.

"Some of my neighbors are anxious and ready to move out, and some are more patient," he said. "One man is walking his dog up and down the street."

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