

DAILY SUNDIAL

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Since 1957

Fires surround valley



JONATHAN BURROUGHS / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Sesnon fire, which began north of Porter Ranch, burned over 5,000 acres.



JONATHAN BURROUGHS / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

As of Monday night, 418 people were registered at one evacuation center, according to Ricardo Hung, a representative at Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's office.

Fires in Porter Ranch and Marek burn 5,000 structures; 2 dead

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For more photos,
see page 6 & 7

A wildfire, fueled by the Santa Ana winds, swiped through the Porter Ranch area Monday morning, causing an unexpected evacuation of the community's residents.

It is undetermined when the fire will be contained and when the residents will be let back into the Porter Ranch community

according to Sgt. Andy Whitman who was stationed at the fire station near Tampa Avenue and Rinaldi Street.

The Los Angeles Times reported that the Sesnon Fire burned 5,000 acres, including at least eight structures and killed

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TRAVIS HARMON / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Firefighters work on putting out the flames of the Porter Ranch fire.

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ONLINE EDITION

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FIRES

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one person.

Residents were skeptical at the severity of the fire until it spilled over the Santa Susana Range and burned toward the Porter Ranch homes.

Porter Ranch resident Jude Lee said that everything was fine when she left home at 9:30 a.m. and returned to a terrifying scene.

"I came back to see hell next to my house," Lee said.

Police provided residents with assistance, yet they were proved difficult when they were asked to grant access to some civilians to their homes.

"We are escorting people up if there're children (and) family," Whitman said.

Rena Lynn and Delfin San Jose, Porter Ranch residents who left work from Hollywood when they saw the fire spread to Porter Ranch, said their kids were at home with their grandmother when the community began to evacuate. Delfin San Jose said the police made it difficult to let him into his home.

Shepherd of the Hills Church was used as an evacuation center for evacuees in the Porter Ranch fires.

The American Red Cross, Wal-Mart, State Farm Insurance, and U-haul provided donations and services along

with local restaurants that served food to the community.

Residents were spread throughout the church, outside and inside. Some were just glad they have made it out safely.

"I don't care what I left behind me, it can all be replaced," said Alicia Gelpi, an evacuee of the Porter Ranch fire. Gelpi's grandson, Bill Gelpi, said he is not worried.

"I have a lot of faith in our firemen, I know they are doing the best of their abilities," he said.

Other residents were at a state of panic and anger.

"I need to get my passport from my house," said Samira Al-Hafiz, a visitor from Russia. "I don't care what cops tell me, I'm walking up there," Samira said.

Red Cross volunteer and adjunct CSUN professor, Craig Rentezky, was working at Shepherd of the Hills Church shelter.

"This is a great facility that is open to the public to meet their needs, we are expecting a lot of evacuees to come here tonight," Rentezky said.

Shepherd of the Hills Church is the closest evacuation center to the Porter Ranch evacuated community. All the services that were offered were free of charge.

"They even have showers if evacu-

ees want to enjoy that," Rentezky said.

One of the organizers of the evacuation center was Pastor Tim Winter.

"We called (the police) if they needed any help," Winter said.

Ricardo Hung, a Harbor area director for Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's office, said as of Monday night, 418 people were registered at the evacuation center and 700 meals were provided.

"(It) doesn't look like people were going back home tonight...People are making arrangements with families and friends to stay overnight," Hung said.

"As long as there is a need, we'll keep it open," said David Roberts, a Red Cross volunteer.

Mike Johnson, a volunteer of the church, said that all the help and support was received from family members who attended that church or who just want to be part of this hard time.

The Sesnon fire coincided with the Marek fire in the northeast end of the valley that began early Sunday.

The 118 freeway opened Monday evening after being closed most of the day because of the Sesnon fire.

E-mails and phone calls were sent out to CSUN students and a press release was posted on the CSUN website notifying students of cancelled classes.

Signs were also posted on the doors of classrooms saying classes were cancelled.

Evacuation Sites

All persons displaced by the fire are encouraged to visit the shelter and "register" their well-being, even if they do not plan on staying.

Sesnon Fire Evacuation Site
American Red Cross Evacuation Shelter
Shepherd of the Hills Church
19700 Rinaldi St.
Porter Ranch, CA 91326

Marek Fire Evacuation Site
San Fernando High School
Red Cross Evacuation Shelter
San Fernando High School
11133 Omelveny Ave.
San Fernando, CA 91340

ANIMAL SHELTERS Pierce College is no longer able to accept animals and livestock.
Contact L.A. Animal Services: (888) 452-7381

Information on human services, shelter and special needs assistance, contact:

City of Los Angeles - Public Information Hotline: (800) 439-2909

2-1-1 LA County: 2-1-1 or (800) 339-6993

American Red Cross, Los Angeles Chapter: (888) 737-4306

Information provided by the Los Angeles Fire Department
For more information, visit www.lafd.org

Wildfires: How to stay protected

With fires plaguing the CSUN area, the American Lung Association of California recommends that people with respiratory problems like asthma, emphysema and bronchitis should monitor their breathing and exposure to airborne matter. Should problems develop they should consult a physician immediately.

IN AFFECTED AREAS:

Don't go outside if at all possible. The best protection is to avoid exposure. Masks are no substitute for avoiding the exposure all together.

MASKS

can help reduce exposure if you have to be outside in high smoke areas. Use an NIOSH branded, N95 or P100 mask, properly fitted. They pose special concerns for people with lung diseases who would have additional difficulties breathing with them because of their disease. People with lung diseases should consult with their doctors about using a mask.

THE "DAMP CLOTH" OPTION

may be an emergency substitute, but with the availability of N95 respirator masks, it may be a good idea to have an N95 ready in case of evacuation or emergency. If caught unexpectedly in a smoke situation, a damp rag would likely be better than nothing, but it has greater limitations.

POLLUTION LEVELS

may vary in different areas. Some areas are likely to have pockets of higher or lower pollution levels than would

appear in a county alert. Assume that if there is an air pollution warning in your area (and certainly, if there are no warnings, but you can see or smell smoke), take precautions, which will include special precautions for people at highest risk (children, older adults, people with lung or heart disease and diabetes).

IF EXPOSURE

to asbestos or other hazardous materials are suspected, do not disturb the area. Dust masks do not protect against asbestos. CALL 1.800.586.4872 to automatically reach your nearest American Lung Association or to speak with registered nurses and respiratory therapists at our free HelpLine.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

REMAIN INDOORS

People living in fire-stricken areas should remain indoors and avoid inhalation of smoke, ashes and particulate matter in the air. It is recommended that people in the immediate and surrounding areas of the fires refrain from exercising outdoors; particularly

if they smell smoke or notice eye or throat irritation.

CLOSE WINDOWS AND AIR VENTS

When driving your car through smoky areas, keep your windows and air vents closed. Air conditioning should only be operated in the "recirculate" setting.

FOR THOSE WITH RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS,

including asthma, emphysema and bronchitis, who live in immediate and surrounding areas of fires should:

STAY INDOORS

as much as possible, with doors, windows and fireplace dampers shut and preferably with clean air circulating through air conditioners and/or air cleaners and purifiers. Use air conditioners on the recirculation setting so outside air will not be moved into the room.

IF OUTDOOR TRIPS

in smoky areas are necessary, breathe through a damp cloth to help filter out particles in the air.

THOSE WITH ASTHMA

should optimize their use of medica-

tion during this time and be sure to have medication(s) (pills, inhalers) available in case of asthma attacks, and should consult with their physicians regarding appropriate dosages for asthma prevention.

PEOPLE WITH OXYGEN

should not adjust their level of intake before consulting their physicians.

IF PULMONARY SYMPTOMS

are not relieved by usual medicines, seek medical attention. Symptoms to watch for are: wheezing; shortness of breath; difficulty taking a full breath; chest heaviness; light headedness and dizziness.

IF A PERSISTENT COUGH

is developed or difficult or painful breathing, contact your physician. It is important to be aware that the onset of symptoms can appear as late as 24 to 48 hours after exposure and that smoke can remain in areas for many days after the fires have ended.

Information provided by the American Lung Association of California.

Klotz Center offers health advice for students

ASTON TAN
STAFF REPORTER

Due to the recent fires, Amy Reichbach, health educator at the Klotz Student Health Center, offers answers to health questions students might have regarding respiratory problems while on and outside the campus during the time of the fires are occurring.

Is there risk of permanent lung damage?

Risk of permanent damage is low to unlikely, but long-term exposure can lead to minor respiratory problems for sensitive people. The most common problems encountered are red-eye and breathing difficulties.

Who are the most susceptible?

People who already have pre-existing respiratory problems like asthma and people with weak immune systems.

What can students do?

Avoid vigorous activity, no exercise, avoid biking and take the bus if you need to. Stay indoors.

How can the health center help?

The center has pulmonologists and other professionals on site. Affected students can make use of the "feel better room," where they will be treated. If the situation gets increasingly severe, surgical masks will be made available for temporary relief.

Reichbach also advises students to keep updated emergency kits at home and to have an out-of-state contact to check up with in the event of crisis.

FIRES AND FREE WAY CLOSURES

