NATION

California wildfire burns with ferocity never seen by fire crews

BERNARDINO, SAN Calif. (AP) — A wildfire with a ferocity never seen before by veteran California firefighters raced up and down canyons, instantly engulfing homes and forcing thousands of people to flee, some running for their lives just ahead of the flames.

By Wednesday, a day after it ignited in brush left bone dry by years of drought, the blaze had spread across nearly 47 square miles and was raging out of control. The flames advanced despite the efforts of 1,300 firefighters.

Authorities could not immediately say how many homes had been destroyed, but they warned that the number will be large.

"There will be a lot of families that come home to nothing," San Bernardino County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig said after flying over a fire scene he described as "devastating."

"It hit hard. It hit fast. It hit with an intensity that we hadn't seen before," he said.

No deaths were reported, but cadaver dogs were searching the ruins for anyone who was overrun by the flames.

The cause of the fire wasn't immediately known.

Five years of drought have turned the state's wildlands into a tinder box, with eight fires currently burning from Shasta County in the far north to Camp Pendleton just north of San Diego.

"In my 40 years of fighting fire, I've never seen fire behavior so extreme,' Incident Commander Mike Wakoski said a day after the latest blaze broke out Tuesday in Cajon Pass, a critical highway and rail corridor through mountain ranges that separate Southern California's major popula-tion centers from the Mojave Desert and Las Vegas.



Flames from the Bluecut Fire approach an RV and a vehicle in Devore, Calif, on Wednesday.

Residents like Vi Delgado and her daughter April Christy, who had been through a major brushfire years before, said they had never seen anything like it either.

"No joke, we were literally being chased by the fire," a tearful April Christy said in a voice choked with

Thursday Morning

emotion as she and her mother sat in their minivan in an evacuation center parking lot in Fontana. They did not go inside because their dogs, three Chihuahuas and a mixed-breed mutt, were not allowed.

'You've got flames on the side of you. You've got flames behind you," Christy

said, describing a harrowing race down a mountain road. She was led by a sheriff's patrol car in front while a California Highway Patrol vehicle trailed behind and a truck filled with firefighters battled flames alongside her.

She and her mother, onsite caretakers at the Angels and Paws animal rescue shelter in Devore Heights, said it was only moments after they smelled smoke that flames exploded all around them. They grabbed their pets and tried to rescue nine other shelter dogs and three cats, but a sheriff's deputy told them there was no time.

"You won't make it. Save yourself. Take your truck and leave," Delgado said the deputy shouted at her, adding that he and others would try to rescue the animals. She learned later that authorities did save the animals, but officials could not tell her if her home survived.

More than 34,000 homes and some 82,000 people were under evacuation warnings as firefighters concentrated their efforts on saving homes in the mountain communities of Lytle Creek, Wrightwood and Phelan. They implored residents not to think twice if told to leave, but it appears many were staying.

"From reports that we were hearing, possibly up to half didn't leave," said Lyn Sieliet, a U.S. Forest Service spokeswoman.

Although there was no official count on how many homes were lost, Eric Sherwin of the San Bernardino County Fire Department said Tuesday that he had seen at least a dozen buildings go up in flames, some of them homes. Among them was the Summit Inn, a historic Route 66 diner near Interstate 15.

The blaze began 60 miles east of Los Angeles.

August 18, 2016

Railroads show little progress on key safety technology

WASHINGTON (AP) Many commuter and freight railroads have made little progress installing safety technology designed to prevent deadly collisions and derailments despite a mandate from Congress, according to a government report released Wednesday.

The technology, called positive train control or PTC, uses digital radio communications, GPS and signals alongside tracks to monitor train positions. It can automatically stop or slow trains to prevent them from disobeying signals, derailing due to excessive speed, colliding with another train or entering track that is off-limits

Congress passed a law in 2008 giving railroads seven years to put the technology in place, and last year extended that deadline for three more years after railroads said they were unable to meet the first deadline. The law extending the deadline to Dec. 31, 2018, also allows the railroad administration to grant additional extensions for two more years to

BRIEFLY

tenure working for the businessman, will serve as campaign manager.

in part at marginalizing campaign chairman Paul Manafort, a longtime Republican operative who pushed Trump to moderate his tone and improve relations with skeptical Republican officials. In Trump appears set on terms-win or lose.

Manafort's past work for a pro-Russian Ukrainian political party has also become a potential liability for Trump. The Associated Press reported Wednesday that Manafort helped the party secretly route at least \$2.2 million in payments to a pair of prominent

Rarely do presidential campaigns undergo this level of tumult at this stage of the general election. Wednesday's announcements come less than three months before Trump's Election Day faceoff with Democrat Hillary Clinton, and roughly six weeks before early voting begins.

Fed minutes: Conditions could

The moves are aimed

breaking with that approach, finishing the race on his own

Washington lobbying firms.

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railroads that have installed PTC but are still testing the systems

So far, PTC is in operation on nine percent of freight route miles and 22 percent of passenger train miles, the report said.

Freight railroads have equipped 34 percent of their locomotives, installed 73 percent of their radio towers and completed 11 percent of their track segments. Passenger railroads have equipped 29 percent of their locomotives, installed 46 percent of their radio towers, and completed 12 percent of their track segments.

But progress varies considerably by railroad. For example, BNSF has equipped 4,309 of its 5,000 locomotives, but Union Pacific has equipped only 13 of its 5,656 locomotives.

Trump shakes up staff, intent on finishing race on own terms

NEW YORK (AP) -Frustrated with his troubled candidacy, Donald Trump is hinging his presidential hopes on a risky bet: that the fiery populism and freewheeling style that won him the Republican nomination give him a better shot at the White House than uniting his party and rallying moderate voters.

Trump underscored that conviction Wednesday with a staff overhaul at his campaign's highest levels, the second shake-up in the past two months. The Republican nominee tapped Stephen Bannon — a combative conservative media executive with no campaign experience — to serve as CEO of his White House bid.

Pollster Kellyanne Conway, who has known Trump for years and gained his trust during her brief

'soon warrant' a rate hike

WASHINGTON (AP) - Federal Reserve officials believed last month that near-term risks to the U.S. economy had subsided and that an interest rate increase could soon be warranted. But they did not indicate when they would likely raise rates.

The minutes of their July 26-27 meeting, released Wednesday, show that officials were encouraged by a rebound in job growth. They also took note of a stabilization of financial markets after a bout of turbulence triggered by Britain's June 23 vote to leave the European Union.

The Fed officials believed those developments had lessened the risks for the economy in the short run. The minutes show that as a result, the officials thought a rate increase "was or would soon be warranted.'

But a key factor holding the Fed officials back was the stubbornly slow rate of inflation, which has been running below the central bank's 2 percent target for more than four years, according to the minutes.

Some analysts said the minutes showed that it's possible the Fed could raise rates as early as September, especially if job growth and other economic data come in on the strong side between now and the Sept. 20-21 meeting. But many think the Fed will lack enough certainty to act, especially if inflation remains far below the Fed's target.

In minutes from the meeting, the Fed noted that the job market had rebounded from a brief slump. Still, it said it planned to monitor global economic threats and financial developments to ensure that they don't slow the economy.

NIGHT OWL

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