

At least 10 dead as fires burn in California wine country

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SANTA ROSA, Calif. — Wildfires whipped by powerful winds swept through California wine country Monday, killing at least 10 people, destroying 1,500 homes and businesses and sending thousands fleeing as flames raged unchecked through high-end resorts, grocery stores and tree-lined neighborhoods.

As he fled through the ember-strewn streets of his neighborhood in Santa Rosa, Jeff Okrepkie knew it was probably the last time he would see his home of the past five years standing.

His worst fears were confirmed Monday morning, when a friend sent him a photo of what was left: a smoldering heap of burnt metal and debris.

“We live in the valley, where it’s concrete and strip malls and hotels and supermarkets,” Okrepkie said. “The last thing you think is a forest fire is going to come and wipe us out.”

At least 10 people died and two were seriously injured in the blazes that started on Sunday, fire officials said.

The flames were burning “at explosive rates” because of 50 mph winds, said Ken Pimlott, director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Fourteen large fires were burning, spread over a 200-mile region north of San Francisco from Napa in the south to Redding in the north. Gov. Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency in Napa, Sonoma and Yuba counties.

It was unusual to have so many fires take off at the same time, fire officials said, though October has generally been the most destructive time of year for California wildfires.

The ferocity of the flames forced authorities to focus primarily on getting people out safely, even if it meant abandoning structures to the fire. The fire area covered more than 100 square miles over eight counties.



Napa County firefighter Jason Sheumann sprays water on a home as he battles flames from a wildfire Monday, in Napa, Calif. Wildfires whipped by powerful winds swept through Northern California sending residents on a headlong flight to safety through smoke and flames as homes burned.

AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli



The fire-ravaged Signorello Estate winery is seen through a window Monday in Napa, Calif.

AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez



Smoke rises as a wildfire burns near Kenzo Estate in Napa, Calif., Monday.

Michael Short/San Francisco Chronicle via AP

Elsewhere in the state, a fire churning through canyons in hilly neighborhoods of Orange County burned multiple homes and forced residents of about 1,000 homes to evacuate.

Some of the largest blazes were in Napa and Sonoma counties, home to dozens of

wineries that attract tourists from around the world. They sent smoke as far south as San Francisco, about 60 miles (96 kilometers) away. What caused the blazes was not known.

Fires also burned in Yuba, Butte and Nevada counties — all north of the state capital.

The inferno blackened miles along one of the main gateways into wine country, State Highway 12 into Sonoma County. Wooden fence posts and guard rails burned fiercely. Thick smoke roiled from one winery, JR Cohn.

The fires also damaged the

Silverado Resort in Napa and a Hilton hotel in Santa Rosa, the largest city in the fire area, with a population of about 175,000.

Kim Hoe, a 33-year-old tech worker from Penang, Malaysia, was staying at the Hilton Sonoma Wine Country, which was gutted

by flames. He said the power went out around 1 a.m., and he and his colleagues started packing up when someone knocked on the door and told them to run.

“We just had to run and run. It was full of smoke. We could barely breathe. It was dangerous,” Hoe said.

They returned in the morning to find the hotel had been destroyed along with most of their possessions. Hoe was relieved he had taken his passport and a few essential items.

Santa Rosa lost a Kmart, restaurants and an unknown number of businesses and homes. The blaze shut down schools and forced more than 200 patients at two city hospitals to evacuate.

Firefighters rushed to a state home for the severely disabled when flames reached one side of the center’s sprawling campus in the historic Sonoma County town of Glen Ellen. Emergency workers leapt from their cars to aid in the evacuation. Crews got the more than 200 patients from the threatened buildings, one firefighter said, as flames closed within a few dozen feet.

Residents throughout the area described a headlong flight to safety through smoke and flames.

Mike Turpen, 38, was at a bar in Glen Ellen early Monday when a stranger wearing a smoke mask ran in and yelled that there was a fire. Turpen raced home through flames in his Ford F-250.

“It was like Armageddon was on,” Turpen said. “Every branch of every tree was on fire.”

He woke later to find all his neighbors’ homes on fire, but stayed behind to try to defend his own rental home.

By late morning, Turpen, wearing shorts, a kerchief mask and goggles, was the last man standing for miles along one abandoned road. His yard and all those around him were burned, smoking and still flaming in a few spots. But his home was still standing.

Trump’s list of immigration demands threaten DACA deal

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump’s long list of immigration demands has landed with a thud among lawmakers hopeful for a deal to protect hundreds of thousands of young immigrants from deportation.

The list of demands released late Sunday includes funding for a southern border wall and a crackdown on so-called sanctuary cities — items that are cheered by the president’s most loyal supporters, but are non-starters among Democrats and could divide Republicans, who will have to come together on any deal.

The demands have left pro-immigration activists alarmed. And some are scratching their heads, given that the president appeared to sign off on a more palatable deal with Democrats just weeks ago.

“To stall the progress that Democrats and Republicans have been fostering in giving permanent relief to more than 800,000 DREAMers is sabotage,” said U.S. Rep. Raúl Grijalva, an Arizona Democrat and frequent Trump critic.

House and Senate leaders on both sides of the aisle have said they want to find a legislative solution to extend protections first granted under former President Barack Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA. Trump announced last month that he was phasing out DACA, but gave Congress six months to act before recipients’ work permits begin to expire.

Trump suggested at the time that he was eager for a deal, telling reporters, “I have a love for these people and hopefully now Congress will be able to help them and do it properly.”

Days later, he appeared to reach the broad outlines of an agreement with the House and Senate’s top Democrats, Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer, in which the president would be open to extended DACA protections in exchange for a package of

border security measures.

While Trump made clear that he still expected funding for his border wall, he said repeatedly that the funding could come later, in separate legislation.

In a joint statement Sunday night, Pelosi and Schumer said Trump could not “be serious about” the plan the White House had unveiled, which includes not only the wall, but dozens of other controversial measures, including a crackdown on unaccompanied immigrant minors and a complete overhaul of the legal immigration system.

Some of those who hope to see DACA protections extended said they remain optimistic the president will show flexibility, treating the priorities as a policy wish-list and starting point for negotiation.

Others see the demands as part of a plot orchestrated by Trump’s chief policy adviser, Stephen Miller, an immigra-



In this Oct. 7 photo, President Donald Trump speaks to reporters before leaving the White House in Washington for a brief stop at Andrews Air Force Base in Md., on his way to Greensboro, N.C.

AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta

tion hardliner, to derail any chance of a DACA deal.

“I don’t think President Trump wants to be the president who deports 700,000 young people,” said Ali Noorani, executive director of the National Immigration Forum, who described the list as a “big torpedo” to bipar-

tisan negotiations already under way.

“I think the president’s staff have led him into a corner,” Noorani said, predicting the president would “not be happy when he realizes it.”

But one person familiar with the president’s thinking said the list was intended to

make clear that Trump is no longer interested in forging a DACA deal, the same message sent by a White House official’s insistence Sunday that any path to citizenship for DACA recipients was off the table.

After backing an establishment Senate candidate who lost by 10 points in an Alabama special election last month, the president is working to please his base supporters, signing a new religious liberty executive order and broadcasting his intention to decertify the Iran nuclear deal.

“The president has made clear he wants Congress to act and pass responsible immigration reform in conjunction with any legislation related to DACA, which will include

legal authorities to close border security loopholes, restoring interior enforcement, and reforming the legal immigration system,” said White House spokeswoman Kelly Love.

Presidential counselor Kellyanne Conway told Fox News the president was “open to a deal” on DACA but only “along with all these other critical functions.”

“You know for years, this country, including Capitol Hill and the swamp, they’ve always asked: what more can we do for the illegal immigrant, what’s fair to the illegal immigrant? This president is asking: what’s fair to America? What’s fair to the American worker? What’s fair to the American community?” she said.

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