

# Illegal fires ignite massive Colorado blazes, spur arrests

Crews make progress on blaze on California-Oregon border

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Associated Press

DENVER — An illegal campfire likely ignited another destructive blaze in Colorado, an outcome authorities were trying to avoid across the hot, dry U.S. West by enforcing strict fire rules and closing some public lands.

Several people have been arrested in two Colorado wildfires that burned homes after ignoring local and federal restrictions on campfires, target shooting and other activities aimed at combating and avoiding explosive blazes across the U.S. region.

Parts of Colorado and other Western states have been grappling with heat and severe drought. In Arizona, large swaths of national forests and state trust land have been closed since before Memorial Day, while some national forests in New Mexico are opening up after rain helped ease fire danger that kept popular trails and camping spots off limits for weeks.

A national forest in Colorado fully closed last month



A Chinook helicopter makes a water drop near Paradise Acres as the aerial assault continues to help put out a wildfire on La Veta Pass, Sunday, July 8, 2018, near La Veta, Colo.

for the first time in 16 years to prevent new wildfires started by people. And Rocky Mountain National Park imposed a ban on all campfires starting Friday because of the risk of having a new fire start with firefighters already busy.

Investigators announced Monday that three people were arrested on suspicion of starting a campfire and leaving it unattended in Colorado's south-central mountains, sparking a blaze that destroyed at least eight homes.

The sheriff's office in Teller County, which has a fire ban, did not release other details about the allegations against David Renfrow, 23; Kegan Owens, 19; and

a 17-year-old boy. Renfrow and Owens were in jail, and it wasn't clear if they had lawyers. They have not been formally charged yet.

It comes a week after a man was arrested on suspicion of starting the state's third-largest wildfire in recorded history by not fully extinguishing an illegal fire pit. It has destroyed more than 130 homes in southern Colorado, but firefighters have made significant progress against the 168-square-mile fire.

In California, fires on both ends of the state eased Monday.

Crews gained some ground against flames on the California-Oregon border that killed

a person and injured three firefighters. The blaze, which threatened more than 800 structures, was partially contained, but fire officials were concerned about erratic winds later Monday.

The fire has destroyed 81 structures, but officials have not determined how many are homes.

Firefighter Brandon Feller suffered severe burns to his face but was released from a hospital Sunday in good spirits, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

The wildfire raging through drought-stricken timber and brush has scorched 55 square miles and jumped into Oregon over the weekend.

In Southern California, several destructive blazes that broke out late last week during an intense heat wave have quieted down.

Firefighters in the San Diego County community of Alpine mopped up remnants of a fire that destroyed 34 houses and damaged 15 others. A commercial building also was lost.

Santa Barbara County allowed residents to return to a neighborhood in the coastal city of Goleta where 2,500 people fled wind-driven flames that destroyed 13 homes and damaged three others.



AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit

A Thai well-wisher puts up a poster to pray for boys and their soccer coach who have been trapped since June 23, in Mae Sai, Chiang Rai province, northern Thailand on Monday.

## Four more boys rescued from flooded Thai cave

MAE SAI, Thailand (AP) — The generals and other officials overseeing the desperate operation to rescue 12 young soccer players and their coach from a flooded cave labyrinth in Thailand's sweltering far north were only half joking when they quipped Monday that success was in the hands of the rain god Phra Pirun.

They were celebrating a second day of stunning triumph after divers guided four more boys Monday through tight passages and dank flooded caverns to safety. "Two days, eight Boars," read a Facebook post by the Thai Navy SEALs of the dramatic rescue that began Sunday, more than two weeks after the members of the Wild Boars soccer team were trapped. Another five still await rescue, including the team's 25-year-old coach.

The eight rescued boys were recuperating in a hospital from their ordeal huddled together on a tiny patch of higher ground where they had sought refuge after a rainstorm flooded the massive Tham Luan Nang Non cave complex as they were exploring it after soccer practice on June 23. Their families were being kept at a distance because of fears

of infection and the emaciated-looking boys were eating a rice-based porridge because they were still too weak to take regular food, authorities said.

Officials lavished praise on the Thai and international divers who, in pairs of two, executed the dangerous rescue mission, guiding the boys, who could barely swim and had no diving experience, through a treacherous 2 1/2-mile escape route that twisted and turned through the cavern. Highlighting the extreme dangers, a former Thai Navy SEAL died Friday while replenishing the oxygen canisters laid along the route to the boys' damp refuge.

But the chances of monsoon rains sending torrents of water into the cave and making the rescue effort too risky is never far from the minds of everyone involved in the operation.

The plight of the boys, aged 11-16, and their coach, has riveted Thailand and much of the world — from the heart-sinking news they were trapped to the first flickering video of the huddle of anxious yet smiling boys brought back by the pair of British divers who found them after penetrating deep into the sprawling cave.

## U.S. will reunite and release over 50 immigrant children

SAN DIEGO (AP) — More than 50 immigrant children under age 5 will be reunited with their parents by Tuesday's court-ordered deadline for action by Trump administration, and the families will then be released into the U.S., a government attorney said Monday.

That's only about half of the 100 or so toddlers covered by the order.

At a court hearing, Justice Department lawyer Sarah Fabian acknowledged the government wouldn't meet the deadline for all the children, citing a variety of reasons, including that the parents of some of the youngsters have already been deported.

Fabian said that 54 children will be joined with their

parents by the end of Tuesday at locations across the country and that an additional five were undergoing final background checks.

It was the first time the government indicated whether the parents and children would be released or detained together. They will be set free in the U.S. pending the outcome of their

immigration cases, which can take several years.

Fabian didn't say why they were being released, but U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has little space to hold families.

ICE has three family detention centers with room for about 3,000 people in all, and the places are already at or near capacity.

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