

# New fire erupts in Northern California; homes threatened

By JANIE HAR and BRIAN SKOLOFF  
Associated Press

UPPER LAKE, Calif. — Firefighters struggling to contain destructive Northern California wildfires found themselves facing a new blaze that erupted Tuesday and drove through a rural area near a national forest.

About 60 homes in an old ranching and farming area near Covelo, which is about 180 miles north of San Francisco, were ordered evacuated as the blaze erupted late in the afternoon. Gusty winds quickly drove it through about a square mile

of brush and grasslands, oak, pine and timber near Mendocino National Forest, Mendocino County Under-sheriff Matthew Kendall said.

“We’re advised that the fire was threatening structures,” he said.

However, there were no immediate reports of homes being burned.

Firefighting aircraft were called in but it was unclear when they might arrive because many already were engaged in other fires, Kendall said.

Some 40 miles to the south, twin fires straddling Mendocino and Lake coun-



AP Photo/Noah Berger

**A firefighter runs while trying to save a home on Des-sie Drive as a wildfire tears through Lakeport, Calif., Tuesday. The residence eventually burned. Firefighters pressed their battle against a pair of fires across Mendocino and Lake counties.**

ties have destroyed at least seven homes and threatened an estimated 12,000 more, fire officials said.

Jessyca Lytle fled a fast-moving Northern California wildfire in 2015 that spared her property but destroyed her mother’s memorabilia-filled home in rural and rugged Lake County.

Less than three years later, Lytle found herself listening to scanner traffic Tuesday and fire-proofing her mother’s new home as another wildfire advanced.

“Honestly, what I’m thinking right now is I just want this to end,” Lytle

said, adding that she was “exhausted in every way possible — physically, emotionally, all of that.”

Derek Hawthorne, a firefighter and spokesman for the fire crews, said the hot weather was not ideal but the wind was on their side where he was in the city of Upper Lake.

“It’s blowing into the fire, and it’s kind of blowing it back on itself,” he said.

To the east in Sutter County, a fire that erupted Tuesday night had torched about 1.5 square miles of grassland but no homes were evacuated, state fire spokesman Scott McLean said.

# BPA: Some parts of the substation are 60 years old, need upgrades

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serve the goods.

The BPA last Thursday announced it would cancel Friday’s planned outage, along with outages scheduled for Aug. 17-18 and 24-25. Tyler, the BPA spokesperson, said the agency listened to the public and took the concerns seriously. He recalled Van-

dehey’s phone call and her emphasis on how the outages would affect the local population at the height of summer heat and the local economy at the peak of tourist season. Fire season also was a major concern, Tyler said, and the BPA did not want to hinder fire and emergency services.

“We thought it prudent to cancel three of the four

outages,” he said. “But we have one on the books that is scheduled for after Labor Day.”

That would be for Sept. 7-8, but Tyler said BPA in the next week and a half will decide whether change that date, and it plans to shorten the duration.

But eventually, the outages will have to happen.

The voltage traveling

into Wheeler County fluctuates, he said, and the BPA needs to install a piece of hardware that would make the flow more consistent and improve the quality of service. But the remoteness of communities in the area means its electrical infrastructure has no redundancies — no other substation to re-route power through. That means there is no way

to conduct the work without cutting the power. Thus people downstream are going to experience an outage.

Tyler also said some parts of the substation are 60 years old, so the BPA wants to upgrade those at the same time at the installation project.

Now the agency is looking at when it can get the work done. This project has

been on the books for two years, he said, and the BPA has more than 200 projects in the queue. Putting off one means shifting pieces, but there are only so many days of good weather available for the work, he said. And no one wants the power offline in winter, either.

“We’ll get that work done, we just don’t know exactly when,” Tyler said.

# TOBACCO: One out of five retailers sell to minors

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mum age was still 18, the agency’s public health division says.

“Selling tobacco to people under 21 years old is illegal, but these data show that nearly one out of every five tobacco retailers in Oregon still sells to people under the legal age,” said deputy state health officer Tom Jeanne in a prepared statement. “Tobacco remains the number one preventable cause of death and disability and kills nearly 8,000 people in Oregon each year.”

Tobacco use costs the state \$2.5 billion in medical costs and lost productivity, state health officials say.

Retailers that sell tobacco to customers younger than 21 face a fine of up to \$500 for the first and second violations of the law, and a fine of up to \$1,000 for the third and subsequent violations.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

**The tobacco industry spends \$112 million a year in Oregon on in-store advertising and promotions in what is called a power wall behind the counters in most convenience stores.**

The public health division is now publishing the names of the retailers who sell to minors for the first time, much like the OLCC publishes the names of drinking establishments and cannabis retailers who have been found to sell products to people younger than 21 through similar inspections,

called “minor decoy operations” or “stings.”

In most cases during the OHA’s inspections, the underage customers attempted to buy cigarettes, but some also tried to purchase e-cigarettes and cigarillos.

Retailers are required by state law to post signs stat-

ing that customers younger than 21 cannot purchase tobacco, according to OHA. Those signs are available for download free of charge on the agency’s website. The state health agency says it began outreach efforts after the Tobacco 21 bill was signed into law in August.

OHA says it mailed letters to every known retailer selling tobacco products and “inhalant delivery systems” in the state, placed advertisements in newspapers, promoted resources for quitting smoking through social media and reminded the public of the impending law change through press releases in December.

About 16.2 of Oregonians smoked tobacco in 2016, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That’s a rate slightly lower than the national average of 17.5 percent.

# BUDGET: Involve residents in the process

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with state gas tax dollars.

Fairley said he understands the difficulty of these conversations, but if the city continues to “kick the can down the road,” Pendleton could eventually face having to close parks, facilities or roads.

In order to put the city on the path to sustainability, Fairley said the city would either have to cut services, raise revenue or find a combination of both.

To figure out exactly what the public would be willing to part with or spend additional money for, Fairley wants to involve residents in the process and create a communications plan on how best to reach them.

While budget cuts could be a part of the solution, Fairley believes the city can’t cut its way into prosperity.

“The assumption is, generally, people don’t want to pay any more (for services),” he said. “I don’t think that’s accurate.”

City Manager Robb Corbett said he and staff continue to support council efforts to make the budget more sustainable, but this wouldn’t be the first attempt at doing it.

Corbett referenced an infrastructure committee the council convened that led to recommendations for a 5-cent gas tax, a \$5 street utility fee, and off-

loading or leasing surplus city property.

While the gas tax was voted down in an election, the city implemented the utility fee and recently sold the old police station on Southwest Court Avenue.

Corbett argued that the city is more sustainable than it was three to five years ago, but he is also on board with the latest effort.

“It’s the right thing to do,” he said.

Councilor Dale Primmer said he has discussed the issue with Fairley since they were both elected to council in 2016, adding that Fairley’s presentation Monday was a good start to the conversation.

Primmer liked that Fairley had a timeline in his plan, and he prefers the city take a closer look at identifying efficiencies in the budget before looking at harder cuts or raising revenue.

If the council decides to seek a new tax from Pendleton voters, Fairley targeted November 2019 for the election. Fairley said he might need to refine the timeline further, but he thinks the city can be put on the path to sustainability within the next few years.

With two new councilors set to take office in January, Fairley said he asked Corbett to forward his plan to the councilors-elect.

# COOLING: The station had 11 visitors on Tuesday

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chatting with two volunteers in the reception area. His skin looked flushed. He had been thrilled to hear about the cooling station and made a baseline for the place.

“It was awesome considering the weather is in triple digits,” Chase said.

He said he tries to drink enough fluids, but knows he doesn’t. On a recent hot day, Chase said he started feeling “dreadful,” with heart palpitations and light-headedness. He thought it might be heat stroke. Going inside stores isn’t really an option since he doesn’t have much money and non-paying cus-

tomers can’t stay long.

If not for the cooling station opening Tuesday, he likely would have headed for the river.

Next to Chase sat Bryan Miller, who said he learned of the cooling station by chance.

“I was walking into town from where I camp and saw David out front,” Miller said. David is David Williams, treasurer of the Neighbor 2 Neighbor board. Miller returned later when the cooling station opened. Miller, who sported baggy orange shorts, camouflage shirt and a ball cap, said he would have gone to Stillman Park to find shade if not for

the cooling station.

There, the men found air conditioning, water and Gatorade, and the chance for a refreshing shower. A few other men sat in a multi-purpose room watching television. One napped on the floor.

Johnson said the sleeping area used during the winter will stay closed. That would necessitate more cleaning and oversight and he doesn’t want to burn out his stable of volunteers. The organization

depends on them in the winter. Two are needed to staff the facility at all times of operation.

The facility has been offering showers from 1-3:30 p.m. every other Wednesday. Each person signs their name on a list and receives a token good for six minutes of showering.

The cooling station had 11 visitors on Tuesday.

Contact Kathy Aney at [kaney@eastoregonian.com](mailto:kaney@eastoregonian.com)

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