

California wildfires are mostly under control, but fire risk remains high

By Laura Newberry Staff Writer
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The California wildfires that scorched thousands of acres and prompted mass evacuations across the state in recent weeks are largely under control, but experts warn that hot and dry conditions will continue to elevate fire risk throughout the week.

The [Maria fire](#), which broke out atop South Mountain just south of Santa Paula in Ventura County on Thursday night and spread to nearly 10,000 acres, was 70% contained as of Sunday evening, according to the Ventura County Fire Department. All mandatory evacuation orders were lifted Saturday.

“We’re pretty much in the mop-up stage,” fire Capt. Steve Kaufmann said.

Crews continued to work on containment lines over the weekend and paid especially close attention to the county’s avocado and citrus orchards threatened by the flames. Two structures were burned, but no injuries were reported.

The cause of the fire is unknown. But Southern California Edison told regulators Friday that it had [reenergized a 16,000-volt power line](#) 13 minutes before the fire broke out. Edison had earlier turned off the line due to heavy winds.

In a statement, Edison spokesman Ron Gales said Saturday that “while we have no information about the cause of the fire,” the line on South Mountain was “near the area of the reported location of the fire.”

In Sonoma County’s wine country, the Kincadee fire that has scorched nearly 78,000 acres and destroyed at least 370 structures since it began more than a week ago was 78% contained as of Sunday night, Cal Fire said. Some areas remain under evacuation, but most orders have been lifted as crews put out spot fires and continue with mop up operations.

A fire that sparked in Northern California’s Tehama County on Sunday afternoon grew to nearly 500 acres by 7 p.m., according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The Ranch fire started near the edge of Mendocino National Forest, about 30 miles southwest of Red Bluff. Some voluntary evacuation warnings were issued.

Several other blazes that had threatened hundreds of homes at their peak, including the [Easy fire](#) in Ventura County and the [Getty fire](#) in Los Angeles, were fully contained over the weekend, officials said.

But Southern California residents are urged to stay on high alert in the coming week. Warm, dry weather will keep the risk of wildfire high, said Kathy Hoxsie, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

Santa Ana winds will remain at bay for the next few days, Hoxsie said, but strong gusts are forecast to return to Southern California next weekend.

“The fire conditions are still in place,” Hoxsie said.