

*“If the winds are strong enough, the fire will begin to advance rapidly. Every fire is potentially dangerous, but these conditions obviously magnify those concerns.”*

Brad Doyle  
Forecaster for the National Weather Service

- Light Initial Attack reported in Southern CA with the exception of the three large fires.
- Roblar 2 Fire started at Camp Pendleton in San Diego.
- Grand Prix Fire started near Fontana in San Bernardino County.
- Pass Fire started in Moreno Valley in Riverside.
- Agencies began placing orders for large number of resources for the large fires.
- Federal Regional Team activated for the Roblar 2 Fire.
- Unified Command Team (including Sheriff's Department) activated for the Grand Prix Fire.
- California Fire Agencies responded to and contained 130 new wildland fires statewide.

## Major Resources Committed on October 21st

Name	Crews	Engines*	Helicopters	Dozers	Overhead	Acres	% Contained
Roblar 2	6	30	5	2	14	800	5
Grand Prix	31	15	8	2	37	825	0
Pass	7	40	2	2	16	125	10
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>1,750</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Data used above was extracted from the Incident Status Summary (209) or other best available data for each fire. When a fire is 100% contained, the fire name is deleted but the acreage burned is added to the "contained fires" section to display a cumulative summary of all acres burned to date throughout the siege. Priorities are based on Area Command. \*Number of engines reported by incident may not reflect engines that responded during initial attack and were not included in automated agency systems. Engines may have been double counted when fires were split into separate incidents.

## Weather Facts

	Cajon Pass	Simi Valley	Julian Weather Station
Max. Temperature	103	100	92
Min. Rel. Humidity	7%	8%	14%
Wind	NW7 G19	E8 G14	E7 G14
Fire Danger	extreme		

*Erratic fire behavior and frequent wind changes*

## Community Impacts

- Military communication and training facility threatened by Roblar 2 Fire.
- So. CA Edison and LA Water & Power transmission lines threatened by Grand Prix Fire.
- Pass Fire results in closures of roads and businesses.
- Structures threatened in Lytle Creek, Fontana and Rancho Cucamonga by Grand Prix fire; Reche Canyon by the Pass fire and De Luz by the Roblar 2 fire.
- Voluntary evacuation by 150 persons.

## Human Factors

- 1,166 personnel committed to fires to date.

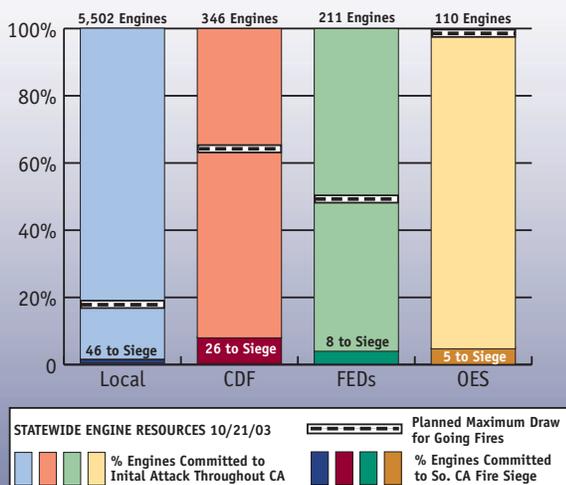
## Decisions

- Preparedness Levels: South Ops-3, National-2
- Grand Prix Unified Command included local law enforcement.

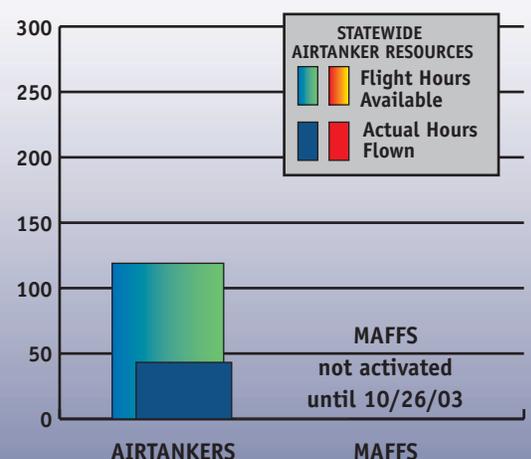
## Damage Assessment

- Five residences burned in Reche Canyon on the Pass Fire.
- Damage Assessment Teams activated to survey affected properties.
- 1,750 acres burned to date during siege.
- Estimated suppression costs to date: \$175,000

## Resources Committed: Engines



## Resources Committed: Airtankers



# It Begins...

## Three fires within four hours

Weather and fuel conditions encountered on October 21, 2003, were perfect to set in motion a chain of events that resulted in one of the most devastating periods in southern California fire history.

When the **Roblar 2 Fire** was reported on October 21, 2003, at 12:01 p.m., threatening the community of De Luz, the Camp Pendleton Fire Chief was prepared.

The previous Roblar Fire of 1985 provided the department and surrounding communities the history and knowledge they needed to predict what could happen. Since the fire was located in a mutual threat zone, aircraft, engines, and crews from multiple agencies were immediately deployed. A decision was made to order a Federal Regional Team because the fire started on federal lands. With the threat to life and property, strike teams were held in the De Luz Canyon to provide structure protection. Preplanning and foresight led to the construction of more than 100 miles of strategic fuelbreaks after the first Roblar Fire. These fuelbreaks proved



*Firefighter protects himself from the heat.*

to be instrumental in slowing the fire enough to allow for the aggressive firefighting actions needed during the first night. The fire was fought under normal wind conditions and was a normal fuel driven fire.

The **Grand Prix Fire** was reported in Fontana, San Bernardino County, at 2:22 p.m., two hours after the Roblar 2 Fire started. The communities of Lytle Creek and Fontana were threatened. Fire was burning in dense old growth chaparral. No residences were lost and no injuries were reported. As the fire progressed, the decision was made to transfer command

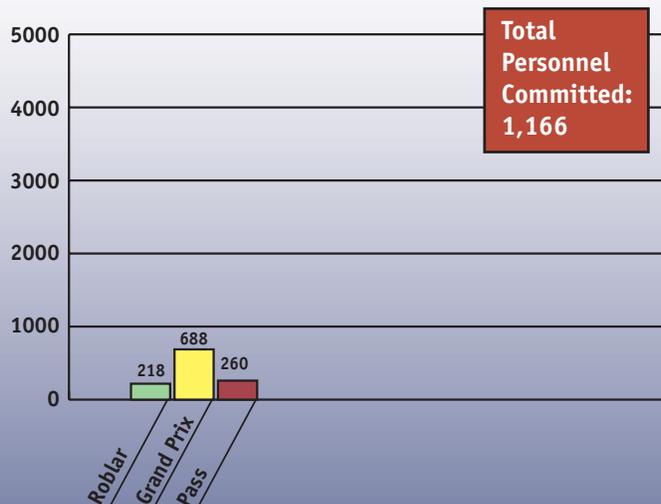
to a Federal Regional Team.

The **Pass Fire**, in Reche Canyon, north of Moreno Valley in Riverside County, was reported at 4:11 p.m. Despite the aggressive actions of the firefighters, frequent wind changes, inaccessible terrain, and erratic fire behavior led to the destruction

### Preplanning and foresight led to the construction of more than 100 miles of strategic fuelbreaks...

of three residences and two outbuildings. One firefighter suffered from smoke inhalation.

### Personnel Committed: Day One



### Acreage Involved: Day One



# Wednesday, October 22, 2003

Resource orders were placed through the National Interagency Fire Center to move out-of-state resources into California.

CDF staffing patterns enacted to call off-duty personnel back to work.

Twice daily MACS conference calls begin.

California Fire Agencies responded to and contained 154 new wildland fires statewide.

*“When these fires started, the conditions in southern California were set up for a disaster. The drought had left the vegetation in a stressed condition, much of it already dead or dying. It was ready to explode into flames if any fire escaped initial attack efforts.”*

Tim Duane, Associate Professor, Environmental Engineering  
University of California, Berkeley

## Major Resources Committed on October 22nd

Name (priority)	Crews	Engines*	Helicopters	Dozers	Overhead	Acres	% Contained
Roblar 2 (1)	11	39	5	8	64	2,085	5
Grand Prix (3)	31	15	11	2	37	1,958	15
Pass (2)	19	86	4	2	48	2,387	40
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>6,430</b>	<b>N/A</b>

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## Weather Facts

	Cajon Pass	Simi Valley	Julian Weather Station
Max. Temperature	99	92	100
Min. Rel. Humidity	8%	13%	8%
Wind	NW6 G11	E6 G15	E8 G14
Fire Danger	extreme		

Remarks: Spotting and extreme fire behavior observed on large fires.

## Community Impacts

- Three high voltage power lines that provide up to 25% of power to LA basin and an essential public safety communication site on San Servaine Mountain threatened.
- Evacuations in progress for Pigeon Pass and Reche Canyon area of Moreno Valley, Riverside County.

## Human Factors

- Two serious injuries today.
- 1,877 personnel committed to fires to date.

## Decisions

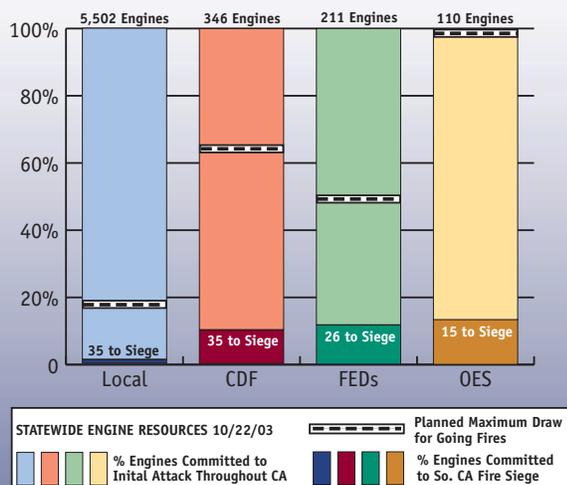
Preparedness Levels: South Ops-3, National-2

- Pass Fire is approved for Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG).

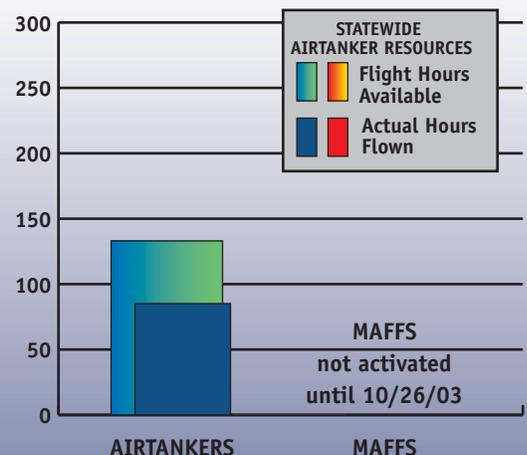
## Damage Assessment

- Damage Assessment Teams activated to survey affected properties.
- Five residential and 21 outbuildings burned.
- 6,430 acres burned to date during siege.
- Estimated suppression costs to date: \$2,215,150

## Resources Committed: Engines



## Resources Committed: Airtankers



# Heating up...

## Extreme conditions hamper suppression

With the dawning of October 22, 2003, firefighters across southern California were not only confronted with three ongoing fires and very extreme, erratic fire weather conditions, but they also faced the possibility of a major wind event forecast for later in the day plus the prediction of San Ana winds later in the week.

The Federal Regional Team assumed management of the **Roblar 2 Fire** in Unified Command with CDF and USMC. More than 450 firefighters battled the fire, dry brush, and intense weather conditions. The fire grew from 800 to almost 2,100 acres, jumping the firebreak at Roblar Loop and spreading

*With high temperatures, low humidity and steep terrain hampering firefighting efforts, five residences and 21 outbuildings were destroyed during the 24-hour period.*

into De Luz Canyon, triggering a voluntary evacuation for the community of De Luz. Evacuees were moved to an evacuation center located in St. Peter

Catholic Church in the community of Fallbrook.

At the same time, the **Grand Prix Fire** had grown to 1,958 acres overnight. With extreme fire behavior throughout the night and more than 1,700 structures threatened, the fire made a run into Grapevine Canyon, a major tributary to Lytle Creek. Firefighters were able to

make good progress anchoring the fire to the south; however, secondary contingency lines were constructed near the threatened communities in preparation

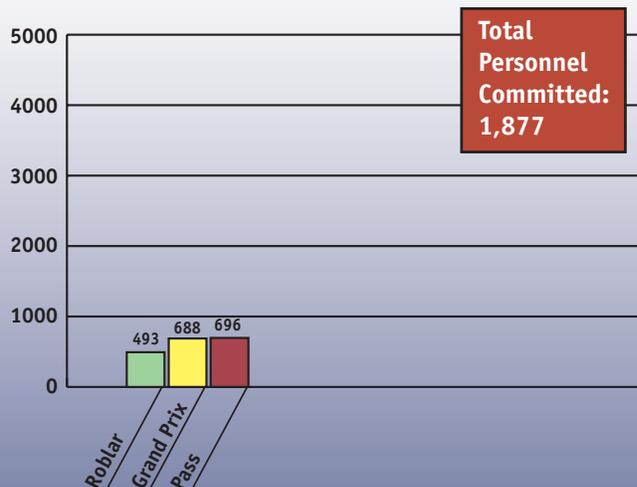
for the predicted wind event. Due to safety issues, Lytle Road was closed to the general public.

The **Pass Fire** grew to 2,387 acres overnight. With the high temperatures, low humidity and steep terrain hampering firefighting efforts, five residences and 21 outbuildings were destroyed during the past 24-hour period. Firing operations were conducted in an effort to secure the perimeter of the fire. A mandatory evacuation was in place for the area of Pigeon Pass, and the fire was approved for a Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG).



*A firefighter checks the wind conditions by using a Kestrel weather instrument.*

### Personnel Committed: Day Two



### Acreage Involved: Day Two



# Thursday, October 23, 2003

*“California’s environment is a fire environment. This landscape evolved with fire and that’s not going to change. This is another example of Mother Nature letting us know she’s more powerful than we are.”*

Karen Terrill, CDF Public Information Officer

- Piru Fire started near Lake Piru in Ventura County.
- Many out-of-area firefighters were deployed to all four major fires.
- U.S. Forest Service prepositioned a Federal National Team in southern California.
- Pass Fire was 100% contained. Demobilized resources reassigned to other fires.
- FMAG approved for Grand Prix Fire.
- California Fire Agencies responded to and contained 127 new wildland fires statewide.

## Major Resources Committed on October 23rd

Name (priority)	Crews	Engines*	Helicopters	Dozers	Overhead	Acres	% Contained
Roblar 2 (1)	32	101	7	15	119	3,885	35
Grand Prix (2)	45	122	22	10	170	3,500	17
Pass (3)	9	15	1	0	47	2,387	100
Piru (4)	12	14	3	2	19	1,000	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>10,772</b>	<b>N/A</b>

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## Weather Facts

	Cajon Pass	Simi Valley	Julian Weather Station
Max. Temperature	97	92	95
Min. Rel. Humidity	10%	14%	13%
Wind	NW8 G17	E5 G16	E7 G13
Fire Danger	extreme	extreme	extreme

Remarks: Above normal temps, strong & gusty winds, low humidity.

## Community Impacts

- Mandatory evacuation of all residents in Lytle Creek canyon initiated.
- Voluntary evacuation of De Luz residents initiated.
- Evacuations extended west of I-15 on the Grand Prix Fire.
- Grand Prix Fire threatened watershed values and historical mining sites.

## Human Factors

- Four serious injuries to date
- 2,755 personnel committed to all fires today.
- Two major power lines burned and power lost on Grand Prix Fire.

## Decisions

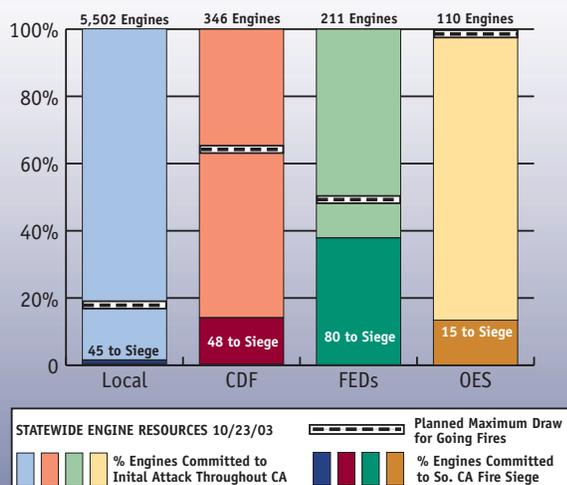
Preparedness Levels: South Ops-3, National-2

- Officials established mobilization centers and several staging areas to help organize responding resources and assign them to the highest priorities.
- U.S. Forest Service pre-positioned Federal National Team in southern California.
- Damage Assessment Team ordered for Grand Prix Fire.

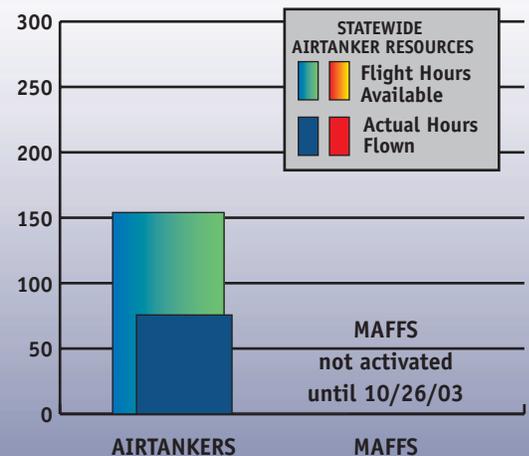
## Damage Assessment

- 10,772 acres burned to date.
- Five residential structures and 21 outbuildings burned to date during siege.
- Estimated fire suppression costs to date: \$4,729,417

## Resources Committed: Engines



## Resources Committed: Airtankers



# One Step Forward...

## Pass Fire contained as Piru begins

With Santa Ana winds predicted after midnight on Thursday, firefighters continued to battle toward containment of the fires. Due to the heavy workload of participating agencies, daily conference calls were set up between the MACS members in lieu of face-to-face meetings. Thus, priority setting remained at the South Ops level.

On the **Roblar 2 Fire**, even though heavy fuels and extreme temperatures continued to hamper firefighting efforts overnight, firefighters were able to hold its progression to 3,885 acres. The communities of De Luz and Sky Ranch continued to be threatened, with voluntary evacuations in effect for the community of De Luz. This fire also threatened to move into the San Mateo Wilderness Area. The danger of unexploded ordinance prevented the fire crews from entering the restricted training area on the Camp Pendleton military base. This hindered containment efforts on the south/southwest flank of the fire.



*Miles of open line confronted fire commanders.*

The **Grand Prix Fire** grew to 3,500 acres and progressed down to the Miller Narrows area, prompting the evacuation of the Lytle Creek community. Lytle Creek Road and Rancho Cucamonga Canyon Road were closed to all traffic.

With the threat of continued erratic winds, contingency plans were in progress to protect other communities west of the fire. CDF requests FMAG for Grand Prix Fire.

Firefighters held the **Pass Fire** to 2,387 acres overnight. The incident

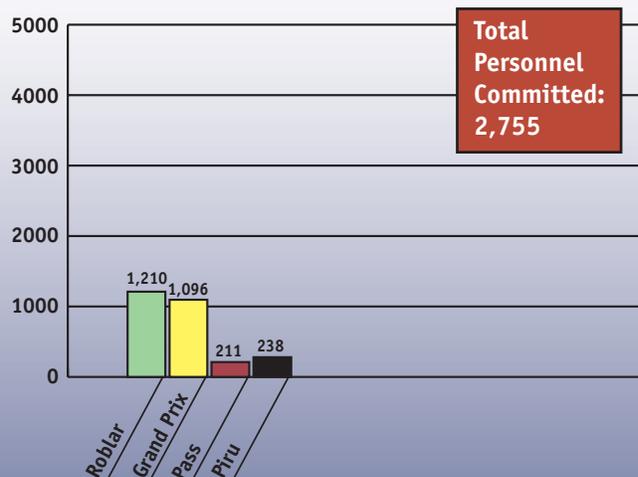
commanders declared the Pass Fire 100 percent contained and released resources for reassignment to other fires in southern California.

At approximately 1:30 p.m. the **Piru Fire** was added to the expanding

*...the Grand Prix fire grew to 3,500 acres and progressed down to the Miller Narrows area, prompting the evacuation of the Lytle Creek community.*

list of fires in southern California. The Incident Commander called for firefighting resources for the fire, located outside the small community of Piru in Ventura County.

### Personnel Committed: Day Three



### Acreage Involved: Day Three



# Friday, October 24, 2003

- Santa Ana winds surfaced on the Grand Prix Fire increasing structure threat in Rancho Cucamonga and Fontana.
- Verdale Fire started west of Santa Clarita in LA County.
- Wind driven fires in northern California occurred with one structure destroyed near Redding.
- Governor Davis ordered all of the state's firefighting and emergency resources into action.
- CDF cancelled vacations and days off for all personnel.
- CDF reactivated five of 10 airtankers that were off contract.
- Happy Fire started north of Lake Cachuma Lake in Santa Barbara County.
- Structure protection for De Luz and Sky Ranch area required on Roblar 2.
- Southern California Edison warned of potential, unprecedented power cutoffs.
- Health advisories issued because of poor air quality.
- California Fire Agencies responded to and contained 137 new wildland fires statewide.

*"This will be the most expensive fire in California history, both in loss of property and the cost of fighting it."*

Dallas Jones, Director of California Office of Emergency Services

## Major Resources Committed on October 24th

Name (priority)	Crews	Engines*	Helicopters	Dozers	Overhead	Acres	% Contained
Roblar 2 (2)	38	92	6	15	150	4,680	50
Grand Prix (1)	45	220	15	18	155	12,600	19
Piru (4)	25	47	6	3	128	1,250	30
Verdale (3)	8	38	3	2	30	200	0
Happy	2	9	2	2	4	250	25
Contained Fire	-	-	-	-	-	2,387	100
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>21,367</b>	<b>N/A</b>

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## Weather Facts

	Cajon Pass	Simi Valley	Julian Weather Station
Max. Temperature	96	88	97
Min. Rel. Humidity	8%	14%	6%
Wind	NW9 G26	E6 G15	E9 G14
Fire Danger	extreme	extreme	extreme

Remarks: Red Flag Warning for high winds (Santa Ana) issued for next 4 days. Frequent wind direction changes. Spotting, torching and fire whirls reported. Fuel moistures below critical levels.

## Community Impacts

- Interstate 15 & Interstate 210 freeways closed.
- Verdale Fire causes evacuations on the Val Verde side of the fire.
- Contingency plans for communities west of the Grand Prix fire are developed.
- Another high voltage power line is burned and power lost to LA Basin on Grand Prix Fire.
- Evacuations in many areas continue.
- Remaining resources on the Pass Fire will be reassigned today. 100% contained.

- Threat to avocado groves from Roblar 2 Fire.
- Ash from the Grand Prix Fire fell 30 miles away on the Santa Anita Racetrack in Arcadia, site of the Breeder's Cup World Thoroughbred Championships today.
- Health advisory issued for poor air quality in San Bernardino County.

## Human Factors

- Seven serious injuries to date
- 4,770 personnel committed to all fire to date.
- Firefighter and public safety are of primary concern.

## Decisions

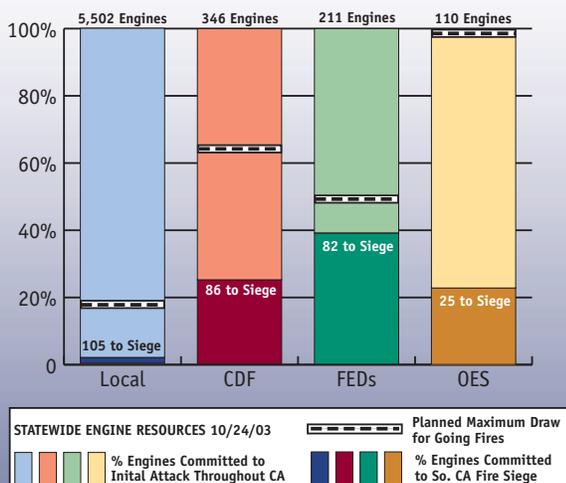
Preparedness Levels: South Ops-3, National-2

- U.S. Forest Service directs the Prepositioned Federal National Team to begin transition process with the Federal Regional Team on the Grand Prix Fire.

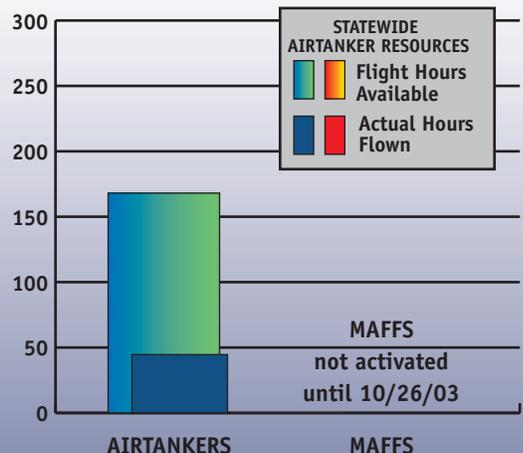
## Damage Assessment

- 21,367 total acres burned to date during siege.
- 10 residential & 23 outbuilding structures burned to date during siege.
- Estimated fire suppression costs to date: \$8,300,000

## Resources Committed: Engines



## Resources Committed: Airtankers



# Increasing threat to homes

## Weather impedes efforts

Winds continued to frustrate firefighters throughout the night. When firefighters received their operational briefings before heading out to the fire line, they found it was more of the same. They faced another day of the weather working against them on the fireline. Moderate to strong north to east winds along with low humidity, poor humidity recovery and high temperatures were predicted through Sunday across the area of southern California.

On the **Roblar 2 Fire**, voluntary evacuations remained in effect for the community of De Luz. Firefighters successfully completed burning operations which prevented the fire from establishing itself in the San Mateo Wilderness. Had it done so, the result would likely have been a large wilderness fire (40,000+ acres) requiring very heavy commitment of resources and structure threat to the communities of San Onofre and San Clemente. For the public's safety, all roads leading to De Luz remained closed to the public. Structure protection remained in place for the residences in the De Luz and Sky Ranch areas. The evacuation center in Fallbrook remained open.

The **Grand Prix Fire** made major runs in all directions due to the erratic winds. The fire increased in size to 12,600 acres and progressed into the communities of Lytle Creek, Rancho Cucamonga and Fontana, destroying five residences and one outbuilding in its path. A force of interagency firefighters provided structure protection as the fire jumped Interstate 15 in the area of Fontana/Rancho Cucamonga and headed for several housing developments. Contingency plans continued to be developed for communities east of the fire, as predictions of a 180° wind shift were made. Mandatory evacuations were ordered for the communities of Rancho Cucamonga, as well as Lytle Creek. The Jesse Turner Community Center in Fontana offered refuge to evacuees of the affected areas. Active fire forced the closure of Interstate 15, Interstate 210, Lytle Creek Road, Rancho Cucamonga Canyon Road and Wardman Bullock Banyon Road.

With residences, ranches and vital agricultural lands threatened in the area of the **Piru Fire**, firefighters focused their attention on building containment lines around the 1250-acre fire. With

the forecasted wind event, contingency lines were established for structure protection in the Fillmore area.

Incident Command on the **Pass Fire** continued its rapid demobilization of resources, enabling reassignment to other fires in the area. The Damage Assessment Teams concluded their inventory of all damaged and destroyed structures. Five residences and 21 outbuildings were destroyed. Three residences and two outbuildings were damaged.

At 1:07 p.m., the **Verdale Fire** was reported four miles west of Santa Clarita. At 5:00 p.m. a request for an Incident Management Team was ordered to manage the incident. LA County and Ventura County entered Unified Command.

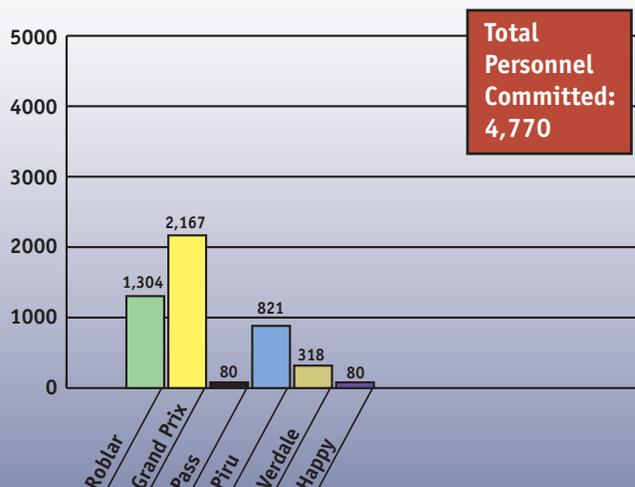
The **Happy Fire**, 10 miles east of Santa Ynez on Highway 154, was reported at 3:05 p.m.

With the rapid assignment of fire resources throughout southern California to battle the ongoing fires, agency administrators for San Diego City and CDF made a strategic decision to increase coverage for all stations in the San Diego area. San Diego aircraft had been assigned to fires in other parts of southern California.



The fires' impacts on communities was vast.

### Personnel Committed: Day Four



### Acreage Involved: Day Four



# Saturday, October 25, 2003

- Weather conditions worsened and magnified danger to people and firefighters.
- Playground Fire in Crestline was started and burned structures. It merged with the Old Fire and became part of the Old Fire Incident.
- Old Fire started at the north end of the city of San Bernardino in the San Bernardino National Forest. Fire destroyed structures by early afternoon.
- Old Fire grew from 20 acres to 10,000 acres in eight hours.
- Cedar Fire started in an inaccessible area of the Cleveland National Forest east of San Diego at about 5:30 p.m. This fire became the largest in California's recorded history.
- Simi Fire started in Ventura County jurisdiction near Piru. Fire burns 80,000 acres in the next 16 hours.
- Highways 118, 126 and 23 in Ventura County are closed. Extreme burning conditions were reported on the Simi Fire.
- Grand Prix Fire transitioned to a Federal National Team.
- Competition for resources were at a critical stage. Resources were ordered from out of state.

*“They’ve had spread rates of 10 miles in seven hours. When a fire does that, your efforts are turned from the firefight to firefighter and public safety. You just hope you can get all the people out of the way in time.”*

Larry Hood, US Forest Service Fire & Fuels Specialist

## Major Resources Committed on October 25th

Name (priority)	Crews	Engines*	Helicopters	Dozers	Overhead	Acres	% Contained
Roblar 2 (4)	38	87	0	15	145	4,740	70
Grand Prix (2)	48	274	15	27	227	27,182	23
Piru (5)	29	16	6	2	108	1,253	90
Verdale (3)	29	84	4	8	88	15,000	30
Happy (6)	5	9	2	4	5	250	40
Simi	0	40	0	0	0	47,150	0
Old (1)	18	136	9	3	124	10,000	0
Cedar	18	27	0	3	5	5,319	0
Contained Fire	-	-	-	-	-	2,387	100
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>113,281</b>	<b>N/A</b>

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## Weather Facts

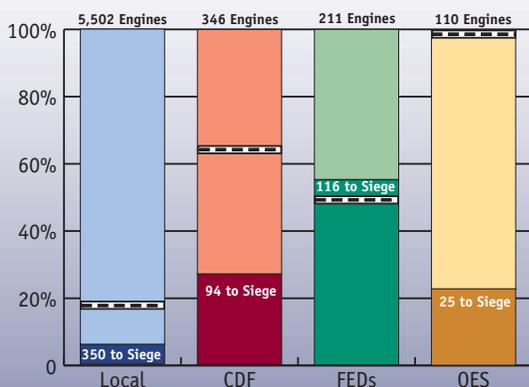
	Cajon Pass	Simi Valley	Julian Weather Station
Max. Temperature	96	84	99
Min. Rel. Humidity	6%	10%	8%
Wind	N14 G42	E5 G15	NE14 G22
Fire Danger	extreme	extreme	extreme

Remarks: Red Flag Warning for high winds (Santa Ana) still in effect.

## Community Impacts

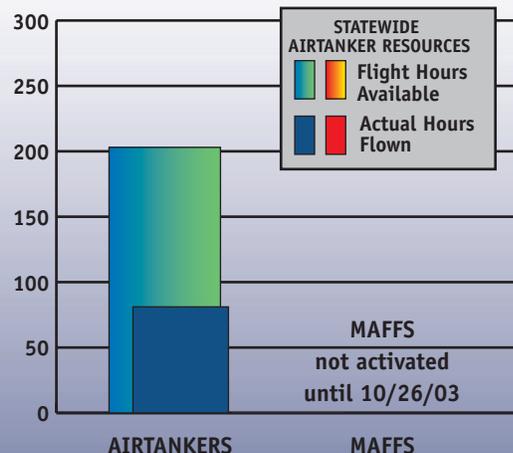
- Cedar Fire Unified Command provided structure protection and supporting public evacuations near San Diego.
- Agricultural interests threatened in communities of Piru and Fillmore.
- Multiple structure losses reported on Cedar, Old, Simi and Grand Prix.
- Verdale Fire reported Val Verde and Piru communities and oil fields are threatened.
- Simi Fire threatened communities of Simi Valley and Moorpark.

## Resources Committed: Engines



STATEWIDE ENGINE RESOURCES 10/25/03  
 Legend: % Engines Committed to Initial Attack Throughout CA, % Engines Committed to So. CA Fire Siege, Planned Maximum Draw for Going Fires

## Resources Committed: Airtankers



- Patton State Hospital in San Bernardino evacuated during Old Fire.
- Power outages to 28,000 customers in Lake Arrowhead, Crestline and Running Springs as a result of the Old Fire.
- Old Fire threatened California State University, San Bernardino.
- Old Fire compared to the Panorama Fire of 1980. In actuality, Old Fire had faster spread than the Panorama.
- Playground Fired burned homes in Crestline.
- San Bernardino Regional Area Resources at maximum drawdown levels. Multiple fire stations uncovered including all San Bernardino Fire Stations.



*Palms fronds were responsible for causing spot fires.*

## Human Factors

- 30 serious injuries to date.
- 7,039 personnel committed to all fires to date.
- Two civilian fatalities on the Old Fire.
- Two firefighters suffer 2<sup>nd</sup> degree burns and are flown to a burn center.
- So Cal Edison shuts off power to Idyllwild.

## Decisions

- Preparedness Levels: South Ops-3, National-2
- Old Fire Unified Commanders utilized Mountain Area Safety Taskforce (MAST) planning effort for crucial strategies and tactical decisions.
  - U.S. Forest Service ordered a Federal Region Team to augment initial attack readiness in San Bernardino Mountains.

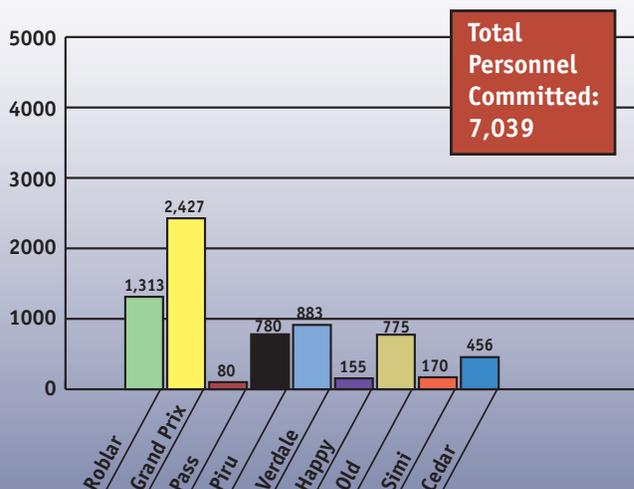
- U.S. Forest Service ordered a Federal National Team for the Old Fire.
- The U.S. Forest Service assigned the Prepositioned Federal National Team to relieve the Federal Regional Team on the Grand Prix fire and remained in the existing Unified Command.
- Simi Fire starts from a spot fire on the Verdale Fire. Incident Commanders decide to split fire into two incidents.
- L. A. County Fire Chief makes decision to strategically place resources to provide structure protection to Claremont and La Verne west of the Grand Prix Fire—even though it meant strictly limiting resources in other areas.
- Due to wind and smoke from the Grand Prix Fire, aircraft were grounded on some incidents and redeployed to other fires.
- The U.S. Forest Service began the process to close the Angeles and Cleveland National Forests.

- Incident Commanders on the Verdale, Piru and Simi Fires began to coordinate & share resources among the fires.
- Ventura County Fire Chief requested ambulances to cover empty fire stations to provide Emergency Medical Service (EMS) to the public.
- CDF initiated request for two California MAFFS from California National Guard.
- Personnel ordered to staff Joint Information Center.
- MACS decides to move to preparedness level 5, Mode-4.
- FMAG requested through OES for Simi Fire.

## Damage Assessment

- 113,281 acres burned to date during siege.
- Estimated 70 residential and 23 outbuildings burned to date during siege.
- Estimated fire suppression costs to date: \$12,229,417

## Personnel Committed: Day Five



## Acreage Involved: Day Five



- Multiple Federal and State Command Teams ordered for Cedar, Simi and Old Fires.

- Governor Davis proclaims a State of Emergency in San Bernardino and Ventura Counties.

- A helicopter grounded on October 24th due to mechanical issues near the Grand Prix perimeter was burned over and scorched.

- Intense media attention escalates from all national and many international networks.

- California Fire Agencies responded to and contained 197 new wildland fires statewide.

## *The Fight Continues*

### *Santa Anas and extreme fire behavior*

Over the area of the **Grand Prix Fire**, a Santa Ana wind pattern developed creating very erratic weather conditions. Winds whipped in all directions. Extreme fire behavior with spotting, torching and fire whirls led to the fire's progression into the Deer Creek drainage. The number of residences burned increased to six, and the fire grew to 27,182 acres. Successful structure protection efforts allowed evacuations for the communities of Lytle Creek and the Banyon areas of northern Fontana/Rancho Cucamonga were reduced to voluntary evacuations. New mandatory evacuations were ordered for western Rancho Cucamonga and San Antonio Heights. The evacuation center at the

*...extreme fire behavior was observed throughout the day, additional evacuations were anticipated. Air Operations were halted due to high winds. Southern California Edison power was shut down to the foothills during the fire runs.*

Jesse Turner Community Center in Fontana and an additional evacuation center in Rancho Cucamonga remained open and ready to handle the new evacuees. Extreme fire behavior was observed throughout the day, additional evacuations were anticipated. Air Operations were halted due to high winds. Southern California Edison power was shut down to the foothills during the fire runs. With the imminent threat of fire spread into Los Angeles County, the LA County Fire Chief made a strategic decision to place resources where he felt they were needed most, even if that meant severely limiting resources at other stations throughout the county. The cause of the Grand Prix Fire was determined to be "human caused." Command for the Grand Prix Fire transitioned to a Federal National Team under Unified Command. At 11:00 p.m. the fire entered the city of Claremont prompting additional evacuations.

The **Verdale Fire** threatened the communities of Piru and Val Verde and 15 oil fields. Overnight, firefighters worked to hold the fire to 15,000 acres. An oil pipeline infrastructure was damaged requiring a hazardous materials response. Fish and Game was notified, and two residences were evacuated in the area. During the day, high winds prevented firefighters from mounting an aggressive attack on the fire. The Verdale Fire was approved for FMAG.

The fire spotted  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile across Highway 126 and spread to Highways 118 and 23. Simi Valley and Moorpark areas were threatened. At that time, a strategic decision was made to split the fire at Highway 126. North of the highway would continue to be known as the Verdale Fire, south of Highway 126 would be known as the **Simi Fire**. With this decision, all road closures were lifted for the area of the Verdale Fire. The Simi Fire burned 80,000 acres in 16 hours. A State Incident Command Team was ordered to manage the Simi Fire in Ventura County.

Eight strike teams of engines were involved in the initial attack of the Simi Fire. Their mission was to provide structure protection for the Simi Valley and Moorpark areas of the fire. At one point, only three of the 32 Ventura County Fire Department stations were covered. The Ventura County Fire Chief requested private ambulance services to cover all vacated fire stations in order to ensure a basic level of EMS for the county.

On the **Piru Fire**, firefighters continued to concentrate their efforts on holding the fireline and providing structure protection for the



*A helicopter dampens approaching flames on the Cedar Fire.*

threatened homes in the Fillmore area. The fire grew from 700 acres to 1,253 acres in 24 hours and was burning within the 1997 Hooper Fire area. Contingency plans were in place for the predicted wind event, as the fire was projected to increase in size significantly. Several additional structures were threatened.



*The Old Fire progressed rapidly forcing the evacuation of thousands.*

Incident Commanders for the Verdale, Piru and Simi Fires entered into an informal Area Command to coordinate and share resources between the fires and better facilitate their management.

On the **Happy Fire**, aggressive firefighting efforts held the fire to 250 acres. There was no immediate threat to structures, however, some residential ranches were located in the area. Good progress was made with dozers, and the fire was declared 100 percent contained by the next day.

The **Old Fire**, located on the Old Waterman Canyon Road, north of the City of San Bernardino, was reported at 9:17 a.m. By 6:30 p.m., the fire had grown to 10,000 acres, with 7,000 residences threatened and hundreds destroyed. High winds and limited visibility limited the use of aircraft to attack the fire. As thousands of San Bernardino residents were evacuated from their homes, the 18-month MAST planning effort paid dividends, as it proved to be crucial in interagency cooperation and effectiveness. The plan gave incident commanders the ability to do their jobs with greater ease during a hectic time. Successful action was taken by the local fire departments to facilitate immediate protection of life and property. Cause of the fire remained under investigation at this date, but was reported by the media to be arson. The Old Fire was approved for FMAG.

The **Playground Fire** starts near Crestline at 7:20 p.m. Fire grows to 20 acres within one hour and begins to burn homes. U.S. Forest Service decides to assign Playground Fire to Old Fire because the fires would soon merge. Evacuations are ordered for Lake Arrowhead Area.



*The Old Fire, started near Waterman Canyon Road and destroyed hundreds of homes.*

The **Cedar Fire**, located in the area of Cedar Creek and Boulder Creek roads in San Diego County, was reported at 5:37 p.m. By 7:00 p.m., this human caused fire was reported as 10 acres in size. There were 50 residences threatened at that time, and 456 personnel were on scene. The fire started late in the day after the cut-off time used to ensure safe aircraft operations. This prohibited the use of air attack on the first day of the fire.

On the opposite end of the scale, marine weather conditions with increasing humidity on the **Roblar 2 Fire** overnight left crews unable to successfully perform a firing operation that would have contained the northeast portion of the fire. Hand crews were tasked to continue work building over two miles of direct fire line. The evacuation center remained open to accommodate the voluntary evacuation of De Luz.



*Downed power lines created safety concerns for firefighters and power outages for citizens.*

# Sunday, October 26, 2003

- Paradise Fire started near Valley Center in San Diego County.
- Otay Fire started in San Diego County near Mine Canyon Road on Otay Mountain.
- Mountain Fire started in the Sage area, Riverside County. Threatened homes east of Temecula.
- Wellman Fire started in Riverside County near Anza. Fire contained at 100 acres.
- Governor Davis declared a state of emergency in San Diego and Los Angeles Counties.
- FAA ordered evacuation of Regional Terminal Radar Approach Control Facility at Miramar Marine Air Station, due to the approaching Cedar Fire.
- Commercial airline flights in region impacted. Some airports closed. Air travel disrupted nationwide.
- Two small planes crashed in San Diego County due to poor visibility from smoke.
- San Diego Gas & Electric Co. shut down a major electrical transmission line serving 11,000 homes and other sites around San Diego.

*“The reason the Simi Fire burned a smaller percentage of the structures that were threatened compared to the Grand Prix, Old, Cedar and Paradise Fires is directly related to the mandatory, minimum 100 foot clearance ordinance in Ventura County.”*

Kelley Gouette, CDF-San Luis Obispo, Operations Chief, Simi Fire

## Major Resources Committed on October 26th

Name (priority)	Crews	Engines*	Helicopters	Dozers	Overhead	Acres	% Contained
Roblar 2 (7)	13	34	0	2	112	6,892	85
Grand Prix (3)	43	347	15	27	233	52,184	25
Piru (6)	29	16	7	2	108	25,000	5
Verdale (5)	21	45	0	5	122	8,680	85
Happy	5	9	2	4	5	250	100
Simi (4)	1	144	6	1	58	80,000	5
Old (2)	30	180	8	4	199	24,000	5
Cedar (1)	30	170	3	1	15	134,257	0
Paradise (1)	14	55	0	0	35	15,000	0
Mountain	0	38	3	3	78	2,000	0
Otay/Mine	8	6	0	0	33	10,000	0
Wellman	0	17	1	4	5	100	20
Contained Fire	-	-	-	-	-	2,387	100
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>1,061</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>360,750</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Data used above was extracted from the Incident Status Summary (209) or other best available data for each fire. When a fire is 100% contained, the fire name is deleted but the acreage burned is added to the "contained fires" section to display a cumulative summary of all acres burned to date throughout the siege. Priorities are based on Area Command. \*Number of engines reported by incident may not reflect engines that responded during initial attack and were not included in automated agency systems. Engines may have been double counted when fires were split into separate incidents.

## Weather Facts

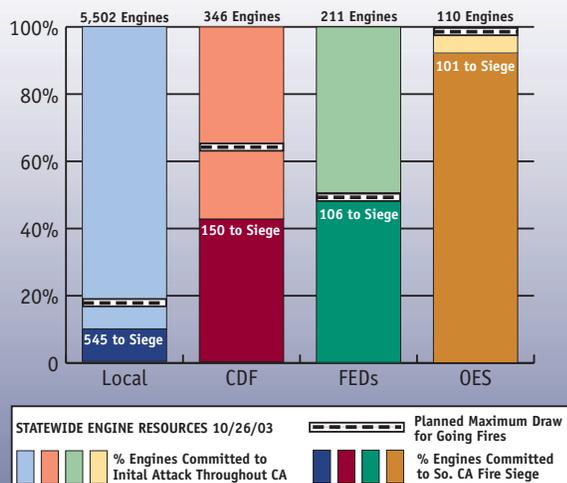
	Cajon Pass	Simi Valley	Julian Weather Station
Max. Temperature	91	69	95
Min. Rel. Humidity	6%	9%	7%
Wind	NE18 G38	E22 G49	E21 G31
Fire Danger	extreme	extreme	extreme

Remarks: Red Flag Warning for high winds still in effect. Extreme fire rates of spread experienced. Spotting over a mile away, torching, crowning, intense runs observed.

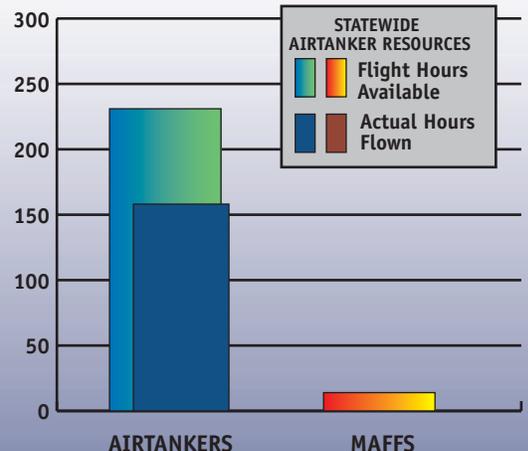
## Community Impacts

- No power in the Anza area affects water supply, hampering water supply for hose lays.
- Widespread threat to domestic livestock and farm animals in rural areas and associated wildlife refuge areas. Ranch structures were also threatened on several fires.
- Mass community evacuations continue to affect many areas including two community hospitals and zoo in Big Bear.

## Resources Committed: Engines



## Resources Committed: Airtankers



- Air quality degradation widespread in southern CA.
- Exposed portions of S. CA Edison power grid are being shut down during fire runs.
- Railroad freight lines in the Cajon Pass area were shut down resulting in \$2 million per hour revenue loss. Amtrak passenger lines also shut down in the Simi Valley area.
- Many major roads and freeways remain closed or impacted.
- Fires caused the closure of businesses, public offices and schools in southern CA.
- Ships docked in San Diego pressed into duty as evacuation centers for military families.
- A total of 22 evacuation centers operating in southern California. More than 5,000 evacuees being housed.
- FAA San Diego Center shut down due to fire threat.

### Human Factors

- Cedar Fire had 13 civilian fatalities.
- Paradise Fire: 2 fatalities confirmed, numerous civilian fatalities reported but unconfirmed.
- 37 serious injuries to date. Serious burn injuries being reported.
- Red Cross opening evacuation centers in multiple areas.
- Resources on the Otay Fire are in a “defensive posture” until winds die down and more resources become available.
- Pressure from elected officials to obtain more MAFFS aircraft from out of state even though fire commanders did not identify a need.
- Congressional and legislative information requests increase to a level that began to impact the Incident Commanders’ ability to make quick, decisive decisions on Cedar Fire.

### Decisions

Preparedness Levels: South Ops-5; National-2

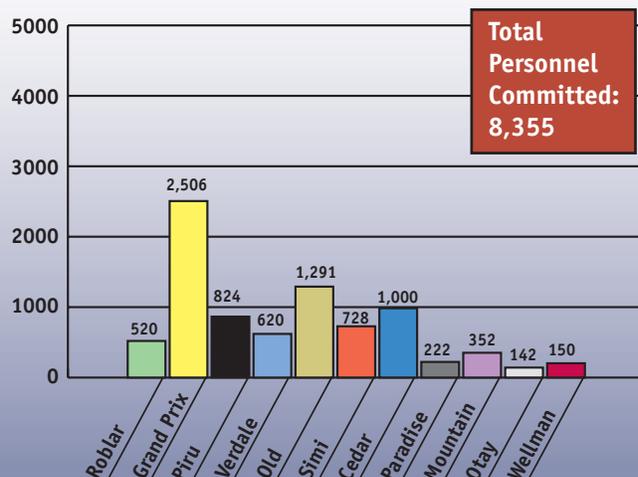
- California National Guard military resources assigned to Cedar and Paradise Fires.
- U.S. Forest Service assigned contract airtankers to siege from across the nation, and activated six military airtankers from outside California.

- U.S Forest Service staffed the Emergency Support Function 4 (ESF-4, Firefighting) at the FEMA Regional Operations Center in Oakland.
- Back firing was initiated along Highway 18 and 138 near Crestline.
- State Incident Command Team assigned to the Cedar Fire.
- FMAG requested for Cedar and Padua fires.
- Substantial resources sent to “heel of fire” in effort to save Julian, Pinehurst and Cuyamaca from an aggressive Cedar Fire.
- U.S. Forest Service staffed the Emergency Services Function of the Federal Disaster Plan in the anticipation of a federal disaster declaration.
- Initiated strategic decision to utilize the International fuelbreak on the Otay Fire for large defensive action.
- State Incident Command Team assigned to the Paradise Fire.
- State Incident Command Team assigned to the Mountain Fire.
- Paradise Incident Commander went outside the normal ordering system to obtain resources due to the magnitude of the situation. Tribal Government helped with incident response by providing equipment.
- San Diego County Emergency Operations Center activated.
- U.S. Forest Service decided to split Padua Fire from Grand Prix Fire and ordered a Federal National Team.
- Grand Prix Fire assigned eight strike teams of engines to assist the Old Fire in the protection of the community of Devore.
- Grand Prix and Old Fire burned together at Cajon Pass.

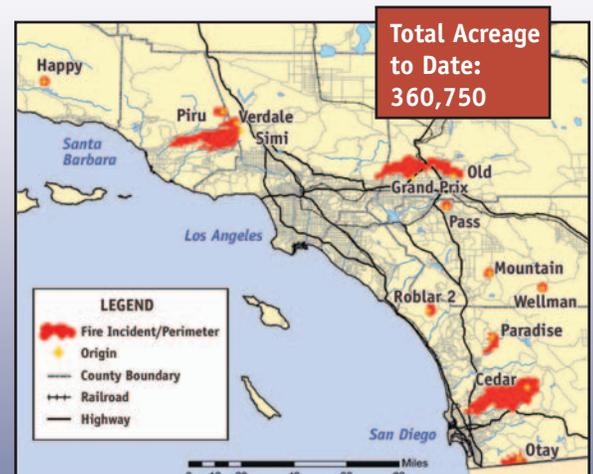
### Damage Assessment

- 360,750 total acres burned to date during siege.
- 435 residential, 151 outbuilding and 10 commercial structures burned to date during siege.
- Damage assessment teams continue to survey and document fire losses.
- Estimated fire suppression costs to date: \$17,582,534

### Personnel Committed: Day Six



### Acreage Involved: Day Six



- The Simi Fire threatened to jump the Highway 118.
- Amtrak passenger service and rail freight disrupted. Union Pacific had to park 30 trains, and Burlington Northern Santa FE delayed 82 trains due to closure of rail lines through Cajon Pass and Simi Valley.
- California Fire Agencies responded to and contained 213 new wildland fires statewide.

## A Full-fledged Siege

### Resources are tapped

As media and political attention elevated regarding the fires in southern California, so did the number of requests for information at all levels. This attention impacted the fire commanders' ability to make quick, decisive decisions in some cases. As the number of fires escalated and a federal disaster declaration was anticipated, U.S. Forest Service staffed the FEMA ESF-4 (firefighting) function.

At 1:30 a.m., a new fire was reported. The **Paradise Fire** was located in the Valley Center area of San Diego County. Very hot, dry winds drove the fire to more than 15,000 acres by 7:00 p.m. There were reports of civilian fatalities, as well as the destruction of 57 homes and 103 outbuildings. Major portions of Valley Center were evacuated. The fire was determined to be "human caused." In order to obtain firefighting resources, the incident commander went outside the normal ordering process. Tribal Government assisted in the incident response by providing additional equipment to fire commanders.

At 10:30 a.m., the **Roblar 2 Fire** was reported as 85 percent contained. The anticipated wind conditions did not surface as predicted, providing firefighters the break they needed to work toward containment. Resources were in great demand throughout southern California. Good progress on the Roblar 2 Fire allowed the IC to release resources for use on other fires. Roads in the De Luz area were re-opened to residents. The evacuation center at St. Peter's Church remained opened.

When the call was received reporting the start of the **Mountain Fire** in Riverside County, fire personnel immediately responded leaving 30 fire stations unstaffed. Within the first hour, the fire grew to more than 2,000 acres, destroying six homes and threatening hundreds more. Area residents were advised to leave their homes and head for the evacuation center at Temecula Valley High School. A large animal evacuation center was established at Cactus Valley. Two civilians received treatment for serious burn injuries. Containment efforts were complicated by a wind-driven, fast moving fire and limited resources.

At 1:00 p.m., the **Otay/Mine Fire**, started in Mine Canyon near Otay in San Diego County. Extreme rates of fire spread were observed. A Bureau of Land Management fuel break was

utilized to contain a portion of the fire, as the fire quickly escalated to more than 10,000 acres in the first six hours. With multiple fires in San Diego County, resources were becoming extremely scarce. More than 300 homes were endangered; and when the fire threatened transmission lines, the Governor's Office and San Diego Gas & Electric were notified. Highway 94, Otay Mountain, and Otay Lakes roads were closed. A State Incident Command Team was ordered.

At 1:05 p.m., the **Wellman Fire**, near Anza in Riverside County was reported. Initially, the local area was evacuated and roads were closed. By 6:00 p.m., residents returned to their homes. With electric power shut off, water tenders had to go several miles to Garner Valley for water. This fact, coupled with limited resources and a delayed response of dozers, mired line construction. Hose lays were hampered by the lack of water, and there was no fuel in the area due to the lack of power. Immediately following the first report of the Wellman and Mountain fires, Riverside county Sheriff's Department deployed 70 deputies to stop all traffic on Highway 74 to look for arson suspects.

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*In order to obtain firefighting resources, the incident commander went outside the normal ordering process.*

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Extreme fire conditions driven by winds in excess of 45–50 miles per hour ravaged the area of the **Grand Prix Fire**. Fire spread rapidly in all directions. High voltage power lines, providing up to 25 percent of the power to the Los Angeles Basin, were shut down. The number of homes destroyed rose to 60. Evacuations, both mandatory and voluntary, continued throughout the area while the American Red Cross worked to establish additional evacuation centers. Interstates 15, 215 and 210, as well as the Santa Fe Burlington Union Pacific rail lines were closed causing major impacts to interstate commerce.

Westward spread toward Claremont and Mt. Baldy communities prompted the LA County Fire Chief and U.S. Forest Service to split off the western branch of the Grand Prix Fire, and create a separate fire to be called the **Padua Fire**.

Firefighters made good progress on the **Verdale Fire** as fire behavior moderated. Over the

life of the fire, more than 800 structures were threatened, as the fire grew to 8,680 acres spreading west toward Piru. Under difficult conditions, firefighters did an incredible job, limiting losses on this fire to one outbuilding. No further movement of the fire was expected. Structural fire personnel started the process of demobilization of resources for reassignment to other fires.

Fire personnel battled against erratic winds as the **Piru Fire** expanded to the south and west at high rates of spread toward the communities of Fillmore, Ventura, Santa Paula and Piru. The fire produced a convection column of more than 20,000 feet. The fire threatened Hopper Ranch and the Condor Research site. Effective structure protection occurred with limited suppression resources.

Evacuations continued on the **Old Fire**, as the winds drove the fire to both the east and west. Although the Red Cross attempted to establish evacuation centers in several areas, the primary evacuation center was located at the San Bernardino International Airport. With more than 300 residences destroyed and the fire consuming more than 24,000 acres, a National Incident Management Team was ordered and established unified command of the fire at 6:00 a.m. October 27, 2003. Backfiring operations along Highway 18 commenced to protect the mountain communities and \$7.5 billion in infrastructure.

The **Simi Fire** experienced extreme rates of spread immediately after crossing Highway 126. More than 6,800 residences were directly threatened and six were destroyed. 10,000 additional residences were indirectly threatened by the fire. Firefighters were committed primarily to structure protection efforts. The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Complex was threatened. The fire closed Highways 118, 126, and 23. The Red Cross opened four evacuation centers within the Simi Valley area.

As the threat to structures and lives was grave, firefighters worked long shifts to battle the **Cedar Fire**. Over 1,000 structures were destroyed when the fire burned through San Diego Country Estates, Barona Indian Reservation, Barona Mesa, Ramona, Mussey Grade, Poway, San Diego, Lakeside, Harbison Canyon, The Crest, Peutz Valley and Alpine. The winds and heavy amounts of dry fuels in the area contributed to the rapid spread of the fire. Extreme fire behavior was observed throughout the night.

With more than 30,000 residences threatened, more than 1,000 fire personnel fought the blaze. There were 13 civilian fatalities, all of which occurred as people were attempting to evacuate their homes and were overrun by the fire front. Many of the communities threatened have very little ingress and egress, which hampered firefighting and evacuation efforts. Prevailing winds were less than predicted, but the fire continued to generate thermal convections that pushed the fire in a variety of directions with more than 200-foot flame lengths observed. Evacuation centers continued to support thousands of residents. Interstate 8, between Los Coches and Crestline, and Highway 67 were closed. Interstate 15 was closed intermittently.



*The Grand Prix and Old Fire merged and surrounded the Incident Command Post.*

# Monday, October 27, 2003

- At the request of Governor Davis, President Bush issued a Presidential Declaration of Major Disaster for the counties of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura.
- Firefighters completed major burnout operation on the Otay Fire. Perimeter spread was stopped.
- Cuesta Fire started in San Luis Obispo County threatening city of San Luis Obispo and Santa Lucia Wilderness.
- Governor Davis initiated twice daily briefing calls to the press with participation from CDF and OES top management.
- Briefing conference calls were also made to Southern California Senate and Assembly delegates.
- CDF management leads briefing calls to congressional delegation in Washington DC and to State Assembly and Senate representatives.
- Lack of sufficient resources for all fires hampered control efforts.
- Firefighter fatigue was a major issue. Efforts were made to establish rotations for rest periods.
- Fire crews from throughout the west and as far away as Michigan joined effort to battle California's inferno.

*“The Cedar Fire burned 80,000 acres in 10 hours. That’s over two acres per second.”*

Tim Turner, San Diego Area Coordination Team

## Major Resources Committed on October 27th

Name (priority)	Crews	Engines*	Helicopters	Dozers	Overhead	Acres	% Contained
Roblar 2	2	4	2	0	1	8,592	85
Grand Prix (5)	44	199	15	27	282	57,332	35
Piru (8)	37	20	4	13	160	29,324	10
Verdale	23	45	9	5	109	8,650	95
Simi (3)	14	210	6	9	151	92,000	5
Old (2)	37	251	10	4	79	26,000	10
Cedar (1)	35	315	9	8	345	200,555	0
Paradise (4)	18	115	2	2	75	30,000	15
Mountain (7)	10	54	6	16	99	9,742	55
Otay/Mine (6)	10	28	0	4	6	45,291	90
Wellman	0	10	0	2	1	100	100
Padua	17	79	0	2	87	8,000	15
Contained Fires	-	-	-	-	-	2,637	100
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>1,310</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>1,433</b>	<b>518,223</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Data used above was extracted from the Incident Status Summary (209) or other best available data for each fire. When a fire is 100% contained, the fire name is deleted but the acreage burned is added to the "contained fires" section to display a cumulative summary of all acres burned to date throughout the siege. Priorities are based on Area Command. \*Number of engines reported by incident may not reflect engines that responded during initial attack and were not included in automated agency systems. Engines may have been double counted when fires were split into separate incidents.

## Weather Facts

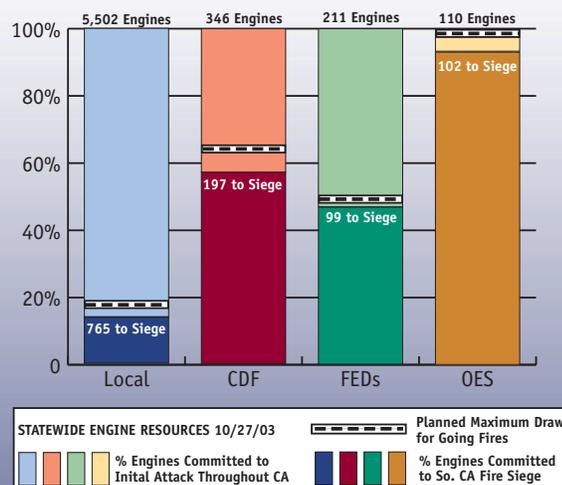
	Cajon Pass	Simi Valley	Julian Weather Station
Max. Temperature	96	77	91
Min. Rel. Humidity	9%	18%	8%
Wind	NE10 G30	E16 G32	E19 G26
Fire Danger	extreme	extreme	extreme

Remarks: Red Flag Warning for high winds rescinded this night.

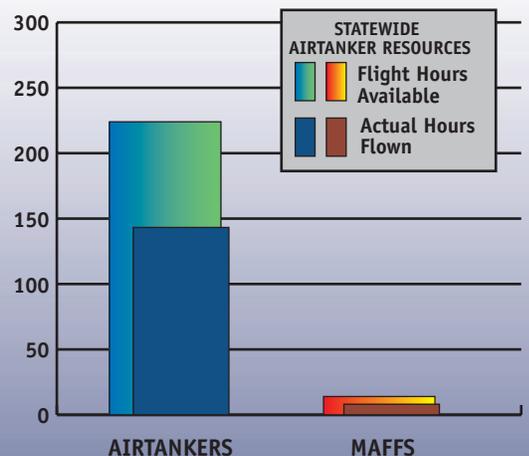


Fire burns above the city of San Diego.

## Resources Committed: Engines



## Resources Committed: Airtankers



## Community Impacts

- Piru Fire threatens the Sespe Condor sanctuary, Sespe Wilderness, Threatened & Endangered species and agricultural assets.
- Major utility poles down and damaged. 50,000 people without power.
- Thousands of structures continue to be threatened.
- Mountain Fire threatens farmland, animals, vineyards and numerous structures.
- Paradise Fire damages cell phone sites.
- Beetle killed trees in vicinity of the Old Fire mixed with structures is a huge concern for incident commanders.
- Sixteen or more towns and cities threatened by the Cedar Fire. Fire extends into San Diego city limits. Mass evacuations occurring, with evacuation centers set up in all major communities.
- Interstate 8, Highway 67 and Interstate 5 closed as a result of the Cedar Fire.
- Poor air quality from smoke increased purchases of dust masks and visits to hospitals.
- NFL moves Monday Night Football game between the San Diego Chargers and the Miami Dolphins to Phoenix, AZ.
- The Joint Information Center (JIC) opened and began to receive an average of 1,500 calls per day.
- The Union Pacific Railroad was closed for most of the day due to the Grand Prix Fire.

## Human Factors

- 17 fatalities to date.
- 13 fatalities on Cedar Fire were private citizens who were overrun by the fire front while attempting to evacuate.
- 53 serious injuries to date.
- 11,106 personnel committed to fires to date.

## Decisions

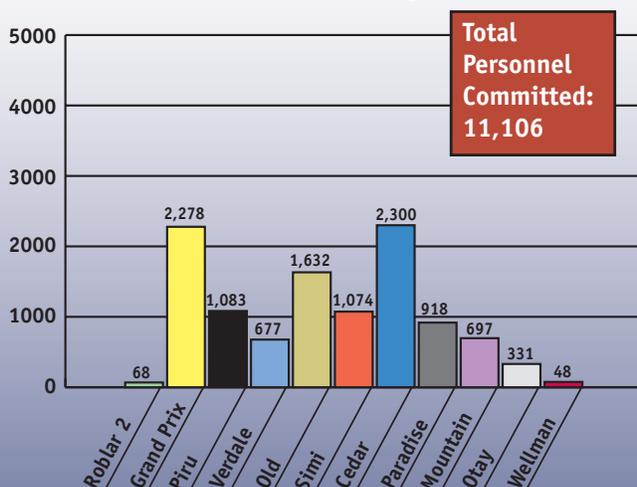
Preparedness Levels: South Ops-4, National-2

- Branch VII of the Grand Prix Fire was split off into the Padua Incident, due to span of control and lack of communication frequencies. The Federal National Team assumed command of the Padua Fire in Unified Command with LA County.
- MACS group began meeting at South Ops with continued conference calls to those who could not physically be at South Ops.
- Riverside County OES activated Level 1 operation.
- Evacuation center set up by Red Cross at Temecula Valley High School.
- Cedar Fire was split into East/West zones. Federal National Team assumed command of East zone.
- State Incident Command Team transitioned to command of the Piru Fire.
- Old Fire Federal Regional Team transitioned to a Federal National Team.
- Los Padres National Forest orders "fire area closures."
- Dozers approved for use in the Sespe Wilderness on the Piru Fire.
- Command of the Roblar 2 Fire was transferred from a Federal Regional Team to the Department of Defense.
- Closure of Angeles and Cleveland National Forests went into effect.

## Damage Assessment

- 986 residential, 10 commercial, 152 outbuildings burned to date during siege.
- 518,223 acres burned to date during siege.
- Estimated fire suppression costs to date: \$20,000,000
- Poor brush clearance around homes with no defensible space causing problems for firefighters protecting structures.

## Personnel Committed: Day Seven



## Acreage Involved: Day Seven



- Firefighter morale was falling due to negative media coverage on the Cedar Fire.
- Ventura County fuels reduction efforts and vegetation projects were successful in helping suppression efforts on the Piru Fire, and contributed to lessen fire impact in developed areas on the Simi Fire. Residents able to shelter in place due to community design.
- Simi Fire spotted across 118 freeway and threatened Chatsworth and Los Angeles. Spot fire was contained at 50 acres. Los Angeles City and County Fire Departments entered into unified command with CDF and Ventura County Fire Dept.
- Roblar 2 Fire 85% contained.
- MACS convened at South Ops where face-to-face meetings replaced twice daily conference calls.
- National Football League moved Monday Night football game scheduled for November 3<sup>rd</sup> from San Diego to Tempe, Arizona. The San Diego Stadium (Qualcomm) parking lot was being used as a emergency relief location.
- California Fire Agencies responded to and contained 183 new wildland fires statewide.

## Safety is Primary

### Numerous homes destroyed

With winds predicted in excess of 40 mph, firefighters knew they would have their hands full fighting the fires throughout southern California.

They realized, even if the elected officials and public didn't, that it would take more than air tankers to extinguish fires of this magnitude. It would take a variety of strategies and tactics for the fire personnel to be successful.

As both high winds and dry fuels continued on the **Paradise Fire**, the fire grew to 30,000 acres. Two civilian fatalities were confirmed. Power to the Valley Center area was disrupted, and there was damage reported to several cellular telephone sites. The fire was held along Valley Center Road and Highway 76. As winds calmed, firefighters made progress in the Escondido area.

Containment of the **Roblar 2 Fire** stood at 85 percent. Santa Ana winds pushed the fire west into Camp Pendleton's military training area. Management of the fire was turned over to the military. Excess fire resources were demobilized for reassignment to other fires.

The Santa Ana winds, high temperatures, and low humidity challenged firefighters on the **Grand Prix Fire**. With the immediate threat to the communities of Lytle Creek, Rancho Cucamonga, San Antonio Heights, Upland, Mt. Baldy, Claremont, Rialto, Fontana, LaVerne and San

Dimas, mandatory evacuations remained in effect. Railroad service to the area remained closed, as did Interstate 210 and 215. Portions of the South California Edison power grid remained shut down. When the fire entered Los Angeles County and Angeles National Forest the Grand Prix Incident Management Team experienced span of control and communication issues. The distance between the

camp and the western portion of the fire was too great for the Team to realistically manage. Moreover, the ability for firefighters to communicate with the base camp was extremely poor raising valid safety issues. The western branch of the Grand Prix Fire became the **Padua Fire**. A Federal National Team assumed unified command with Los Angeles County Fire Department. A successful firing operation started on the 26th was effective in slowing the Westward progression of the fire.

Prior to the winds diminishing, the **Simi Fire** experienced extreme rates of spread. The fire now encompassed more than 92,000 acres. Winds drove the fire as it jumped Highway 118 in the early morning hours. Historically, when fires are fueled by strong Santa Ana winds and reach the area of Rocky Peak near Simi Valley, they burn all the way to



*Fires burned rapidly through dead, diseased and dying forests.*

Malibu. With this information in mind, the Fire Chief launched all available air resources in order to stop the eastern progression of the fire toward Highway 118. This independent action was successful. Due to the aggressive fire suppression efforts by firefighters, the slope over was contained at approximately 50 acres. Several roads within the area remain

closed. Structures along the southern and western edges are threatened and will remain so until adequate line construction efforts can begin. Sixteen homes and 64 outbuildings have been destroyed to date. Through pre-planning efforts by Ventura County Fire personnel, the local citizens were able to shelter in place. Local cellular telephone sites were overwhelmed. Union Pacific Railroad lines were closed in the Simi Valley area effecting freight and Amtrak service on main California coastal railway. Media coverage of the Simi Fire increased drastically as Governor-Elect Schwarzenegger visited the Incident Command Post.

A major burnout operation was successfully completed on the **Otay/Mine Fire**. Although a federal repeater site was damaged in the fire, and there were many utility poles down and damaged, the main transmission lines were out of danger. The area burned was 45,291 acres and the fire had been declared 90 percent contained.

As was the case with many of the other southern California fires, winds drove the **Mountain Fire** to almost 10,000 acres over night. The fire moved very quickly with short and long range spotting. The fire continued to threaten residential dwellings, farmland, vineyards and domestic animals. Mandatory evacuations in the communities of Sage and Glen Oak Hills remained in effect.

Overnight, the **Piru Fire** pushed south and west reaching the communities of Piru and Fillmore. The fire was closing in on the Sespe drainage creating a potential threat to the west. In spite of the extreme fire behavior, steep rugged terrain, heavy fuel loading, and limited resources, firefighters have been very successful in providing structure protection to threatened communities. To date, with more than 300 structures threatened and 29,324 acres burned, fire personnel have been successful in protecting all but one outbuilding. A State Incident Command Team assumed command of the Piru Fire in a Unified Command with U.S. Forest Service, Ventura County Fire, and Ventura County Sheriff's Department.

As the Federal National Team arrived at the **Old Fire**, they found 24,000 acres had burned to date. Firefighters were faced with all the right conditions for a catastrophic wildfire—strong winds, heavy fuel loads, and drought and disease stressed trees intermingled with thousands of homes. Structures continued to be burned as the fire spread rapidly

throughout the area. Fire crews struggled with the elements to provide structure protection and establish anchor points in order to stop the spread into San Bernardino. Several mountain communities were under mandatory evacuations with the primary evacuation center located at the airport and a secondary center opened at the Sultana High School in Hesperia. Successful evacuations occurred due to extensive pre-planning and community participation. Throughout the day, the fire continued

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*The fire moved very quickly with short and long range spotting observed. The fire continued to threaten residential dwellings, farmland, vineyards and domestic animals. Mandatory evacuations in the communities of Sage and Glen Oak Hills remained in effect.*

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to make runs, even in areas that had already burned. Continued structure protection in Devore were successful in that area. The successful structure protection can be credited to firefighters efforts and the use of firefighting gels. Air tankers and helicopters were used to keep the fire south of the Rim of the World and out of the major population center. At the day's end, there were more than 1,600 fire personnel and resources assigned to the Old Fire.

On the **Cedar Fire**, high level Santa Ana winds continued to push heavy smoke over the San Diego area while the fire began pushing east under a light onshore flow. A State Incident Command Team assumed command at 7:00 a.m. Significant perimeter control operations were successful in Poway, San Diego and the Harbison Canyon area south of Interstate 8.

Using a recent 1,000 acre prescribed burn north of Pine Valley and a 380 acre brush reduction project area at Mt. Laguna, perimeter control operations began on the SE flank of the fire that would eventually save the communities of Descanso, Guatay, Pine Valley and Mt. Laguna.

The fire burned easterly and spread over the top of Cuyamaca and North Peaks and was burning in Cuyamaca State Park. Most of the structures burned were in the area west and north of the community of Descanso.