

Tubbs fire in Santa Rosa now ranks as California's most destructive wildfire

Altogether, more than 6,800 structures have been destroyed in Sonoma County - most of them homes - and 23 people have been killed. | 



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An aerial view of the destruction in Coffey Park in Santa Rosa during a flight with Helico Sonoma . (photo by John Burgess/The Press Democrat)

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The Tubbs fire that killed at least 22 people as it burned through Santa Rosa last week now tops the list of the most destructive wildfires in California history, with more than twice the structure losses - at least 5,300, according to state figures - of the devastating 1991 Oakland Hills fire, which ranks second, according to Cal Fire.

Three other North Bay fires that swept through the region on the same morning, two of them in Sonoma County, also now have spots on Cal Fire's Top 20 list, which was updated Friday: The Nuns fire in Sonoma Valley, ranked No. 6; the Atlas fire in Napa Valley at No. 10; and the Redwood Valley in Mendocino County fire ranks 16th.

The battles against the blazes continued through Friday after overnight rains, with crews mopping up hot spots and strengthening containment lines.

"It's looking really good," said Santa Rosa Fire Chief Tony Gossner. "There's only one little piece in St. Helena that isn't tied in. It's cold, but it doesn't have control lines."

According to the National Weather Service, rainfall that began Thursday amounted to 0.4 inches in Santa Rosa, 0.45 inches in Geyserville and 0.2 inches in Napa.

The precipitation helped firefighters quite a bit, Gossner said.

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Over the weekend, crews will continue mop-up efforts with a particular focus on putting out "thousand-hour fuels" - giant trees that would remain smoldering "until the rainy season comes" if crews don't do anything about them, Gossner said.

The weekend push will be especially important, with the National Weather Service forecasting winds between 20 and 30 mph out of the northeast to return late Sunday, with gusts up to 45 mph, Gossner said.

As containment nears completion, he expected what remains of the firefight to be handed over to the locally based Cal Fire crews sometime next week.

The 54,382-acre Nuns fire, still burning in Sonoma and Napa counties, has killed two people and destroyed 1,200 structures.

As of Friday, it was 86 percent contained.

Napa County's Atlas fire has burned 51,624 acres in Napa and Solano counties, killed six people and destroyed at least 741 structures. It was 87 percent contained Friday.

The 36,523-acre Redwood Valley complex in Mendocino County, where eight people died and at least 540 structures were destroyed, was 95 percent contained Friday.

In all, the Tubbs fire has burned 36,432 acres and destroyed 5,300 structures, according to preliminary figures from Cal Fire. By Friday, it was 94 percent contained.

Altogether, at least 22 people died in the fires in Sonoma County and more than 6,800 structures - most of them homes - have been destroyed, according to estimates by the county and Santa Rosa.

"Out of the 20 most destructive wildfires in the state of California, the Tubbs is now No. 1," said Gossner. "Nuns is No. 6, and we were dealing with both of those fires under this one incident management team, and they're complex."

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