

THOUSANDS ORDERED TO FLEE CALIFORNIA WILDFIRE

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Disaster and disaster management

A fast-moving brush fire near Yosemite National Park exploded in size on Saturday into one of California's largest wildfires of the year, prompting evacuation orders for thousands of people and shutting off power to more than 2,000 homes and businesses.

Evacuation orders were put in effect on Saturday for over 6,000 people living across a several-mile span in the sparsely populated, rural area, said Daniel Patterson, a spokesman for the Sierra National Forest.

"Explosive fire behaviour is challenging firefighters," Cal Fire said in a statement.

By Saturday morning, the fire had destroyed 10 residential and commercial structures, damaged five others and was threatening 2,000 more structures, Cal Fire said. The blaze prompted numerous road closures.

More than 400 firefighters, along with helicopters, battled the blaze, said Daniel Patterson, a spokesman for the Sierra National Forest. Hot weather, low humidity and bone dry vegetation caused by the worst drought in decades was fueling the blaze and challenging fire crews, he added.

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