

Winds fan two blazes; ^{wend} ^{Tues} knock out county power

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SANTA CRUZ — Unexpected winds with gusts estimated at 70 mph tore through Santa Cruz, shaking windows, shredding leaves from trees and knocking down power lines.

The winds also sent two planned burns in Big Basin State Park out of control and fanned several small brush fires sparked by downed power lines.

The Big Basin fires, which burned out of control all day Thursday, had blackened 40 acres by the afternoon. Firefighters expected to contain the fires today as the winds died down.

Power was also knocked out to 2,070 Pacific Gas and Electric Co. customers, mostly in north county areas of the Santa Cruz Mountains. At 5 p.m. Thursday, 980 customers were still without power, with isolated areas expected to be power-

less until mid-morning today.

The east winds kicked up around 9 p.m. Wednesday, gathering leaves and debris in odd eddies. Along the beaches, the wind scoured the sand smooth and sent frothing ripples out to sea. Around noon, the wind began to change slightly to the south, a harbinger of rain, and by 5 p.m. a slight shower had dampened downtown Santa Cruz.

The strongest gusts of winds were in the north county. Lud McCrary reported that a gust on a wind gauge at Big Creek Lumber in Davenport registered 57 mph. McCrary said the gauge was sheltered from offshore winds and that the gust on the other side of the mountain were much stronger.

Watsonville Airport reported gusts of 28 mph.

On the north coast, fire crews were scrambling.

Approximately 90 California De-

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partment of Forestry firefighters, including hand crews and one helicopter, were fighting the Big Basin blazes, which threatened to converge. Both fires were burning along the northern border of Big Basin, on the Santa Cruz and San Mateo county lines.

The original controlled burns had been started Wednesday, before winds kicked up.

A 10-acre fire near Back Ranch Road in Bonny Doon was blamed on downed power lines. That fire started at 10:48 a.m. and was contained by 12:45 p.m.

Two more fires near Tunitas Creek and Half Moon Bay in San Mateo County burned more than 100 acres, including a home that contained several rare birds, a CDF spokesman said. The home was valued at \$200,000, with contents

valued at \$500,000.

PG&E marketing manager Dick Smith said he expected power would be restored to all but a handful in the Santa Cruz Mountains Thursday night. The largest outage hit 560 customers in the Lakeview-Lakeside drive area in Felton.

Some 50 customers in that area, as well as 10 near Waterman Gap and four around Love Creek might have to wait until mid-morning today for power, he said.