

Fire & Fire Protection

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Fires and Fire Protection
Blaze ✓

**out of
1-9-85
control**

**State Forestry
out of resources**

□ Fires char big chunk of West
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□ Residents return to San Luis
Obispo homes — **Page C5**

By **MARK BERGSTROM**

Sentinel Staff Writer

LOS GATOS — Like a firestorm, the Santa Cruz Mountains brush fire raced across the Santa Cruz County line overnight, causing more than 4,000 Summit area residents to flee ahead of the flames.

With more than 500 firefighters on the blaze, a state Department of Forestry official said the department was "out of resources" this morning as the fire roared out of control. The fire had consumed more than 14,000 acres by noon, and no containment was in sight.

Three homes were said to have been burned on Mount Bache Road and others were said to be on fire on Chasewood Drive.

High winds blowing toward the ocean were whipping the flames well into Santa Cruz County, prompting Santa Cruz County Administrator George Newell this morning declared a local emergency.

Frank Lewis of the Department of Forestry said the fire is burning to the southwest toward Mt. Umunhum in an area that was consumed by fire in 1961. More than 8,000 acres were burned in that nine-day fire. After 20 years, the fuel is "heavy and fast," Lewis said.

If firefighters are unable to get a line around the fire through the heat of the afternoon, the potential is there that "it could blow out into a



Huge flames approach a home in the Santa Cruz Mountains while firefighters prepare a standoff

Pete Amos/Sentinel

pretty good chunk of country," said Lewis. The weather forecast was for temperatures in the high 90s to 100 with extremely low humidity and stiff winds, he said.

"The key is today," Lewis said. "If it generates enough heat and takes an aggressive run at the canyons it could spread to the upper highlands, upper Soquel Creek drainage area and Summit Ridge," Lewis said. That area, he said, is

largely composed of nobcone pines, which "burn like you poured gasoline on them," Lewis explained.

Fire officials say they believe the fire, which began shortly after 2 p.m. Sunday at Lexington Reservoir, was deliberately set.

Firefighters thought they had a line around the fire when it had consumed about 400 acres near the reservoir early Monday afternoon. But then the wind came up and blew

a hot spot across Los Gatos Creek. The dry, hot grass exploded and the fire "went like gangbusters," said Gary Ross of the state Department of Forestry at the command post at Vasona Park in Los Gatos. "We may have lost structures in the Soda Springs area (just south of the reservoir)," he said.

The fire raced up a sharp draw over the summit and by 9 o'clock this morning had consumed 13,800 acres

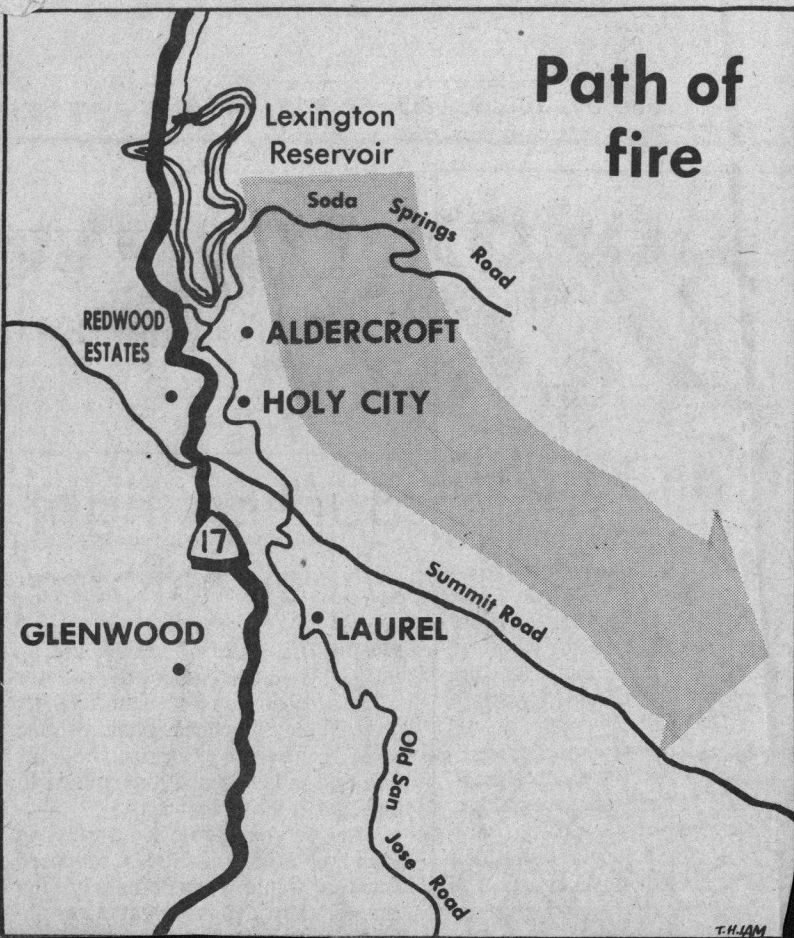
and was moving at an acre a minute into Santa Cruz County. More than 4,000 persons have been evacuated on both sides of the Summit. Evacuation shelters have been established at Soquel High School and Scotts Valley Junior High for Santa Cruz County residents forced to flee their homes.

"With so many fires burning in California, we are not getting the men and equipment we need," Ross

said. San Lorenzo Valley fire departments were called to the fire shortly after 4 p.m. Monday when the flames shot out of control. All other Santa Cruz County fire departments were called in this morning.

"We have been calling for more help (from elsewhere in the state), but have received none. We have no more resources," Ross said this

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Fire rages out of control

Continued from Page A1 morning.

Normally, he said, the Department of Forestry could get help from the U.S. Forest Service, but that agency, too, is committed to a rash of fires throughout the western states.

"Now that we have structures threatened, maybe they (state and federal government) will bring up more men from fires in non-populated areas," Ross said. If that happens, he said, the other fires will be allowed to burn unchecked.

The major area of concern now in Santa Cruz County began as a smallspot fire about 4 a.m. in the Burrell area. "Within 30 minutes, it was burning in the neighborhood of 60 acres," Lewis said.

A strike team made up of Loma

Prieta volunteers and firefighters from Palo Alto and the San Jose area was quickly dispatched to the area to protect structures. Firefighters have been driven out several times by the inferno.

This morning, a few evacuees were driving down Old San Jose Road, a number of them pulling horse trailers. One a pickup with a cage of ducks. One resident returned to check out his home, his car bearing a bumper sticker supporting the Chicago Cubs.

The air was brown and hot, burned of much of its oxygen. White and brown ashes and acrid smoke clogged the nostrils of firemen who have been on the firelines around the clock.

San Jose Fireman Scott Wilson this morning was hosing down the

roof of a custom, wood home at the county line in the 25000 block of Loma Prieta Road as brush 10-20 feet away burst into flames.

"We've been fighting these fires since eight yesterday morning," he said.

Fellow firefighter Ted Sorenson, out in what had been the natural-style garden, was yelling back to him, "Here comes another flare-up."

Overhead, a helicopter made its quick trips from some nearby water supply, dumping its huge bucket of water on the bursting brush close to the home.

Sorenson, dousing the untouched bushes and wild grasses, as he retreated toward the house, yelled back, "I think we're going to save this one . . . we'll know in 15 minutes.

but I think we're going to save her."

Highway 17 has remained open throughout the fire, although commute-hour traffic has been delayed. Virtually every road off Highway 17 into the mountains was closed. The highway patrol also closed Old San Jose Road at Olive Springs Road.

Firefighters and sheriff's deputies had evacuated Old San Jose Road as far as Redwood Lodge Road.

Among other areas evacuated were Highland, Skyland, Adams, Radonich, Spanish Ranch, Long Ridge, Orchard and Stetson Roads and Miller Cutoff.

Sentinel Staff Writer Paul Beatty also contributed to this report.