

Ashes, anguish in fire's wake



Mario Morales searches through a bed of ash that was once his home Saturday for anything that might have survived a ferocious fire that raged through his Larkin Valley home Friday afternoon. "My desk was right here," he said, pointing to a pile of debris. Ten homes and another 10 outbuildings were destroyed by the fire.

Tarmo Hannula
Register-Pajaronian

Residents rifle through the rubble; Trabing Fire contained

By TRISHA LEONARD
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

On Saturday, Mario Morales sat hunched down in what used to be his living room and sifted through the ashes with a burned kitchen knife. The plastic handle had been melted off, but the charred blade was still useful for pushing aside bits of rubble to look for two chains — one gold and one silver — priceless heirlooms that were handed down through his family for more than 100 years.

"My desk was right here," he said, pointing to a pile of debris. "Those chains were on it. I have to find them. Even if they're melted, it's better than nothing."

Morales, a chef, was at work in Mountain View when the Trabing Fire broke out Friday about 2 p.m. He rushed home when his ex-wife called and told him his house was in danger, but by the time he arrived, it was too late. His three children were not home at the time of the fire, but on Saturday afternoon, Morales contin-



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An outbuilding on Trabing Road is engulfed in flames Friday at 6 p.m.

ued to call out for his dog Gouda. He had already checked at the animal shelter and the fairgrounds, but was unable to find Gouda.

"Hopefully my job will let me take the time I need," he said.

Morales was eventually able to find the silver chain — which was completely melted

and only recognizable by the type of metal — but continued to search for the gold one.

As homeowners were allowed to return to their property, many faced the loss of their homes, while others planned to do repairs. Some houses were singed by the 630-acre fire, but managed to stay intact.

The fire burned 10 homes

and 10 outbuildings, Cal Fire reported Sunday.

Milder weather helped firefighters contain the Trabing Fire by 8 p.m. Sunday, according to Loreen Borelli, fire captain with Cal Fire.

"The weather's gotten a lot cooler, our humidities are much

better," she said.

By this morning, PG&E hoped to have power restored to homes in the fire area.

In the Larkin Valley area, the golden landscape that residents were familiar with is now black

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Lightning sparks blaze near Trabing Fire area

Thunderstorms bring cooler conditions but also new fires

By TRISHA LEONARD
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

Thunderstorms that rolled across Santa Cruz County Saturday were a mixed blessing for firefighters battling the Trabing Fire in the Larkin Valley area.

The storms cut the heat so firefighters could bring the fire to heel. By 8 p.m. Sunday, the 630-acre blaze was fully contained, Cal Fire reported.

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RUBBLE

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in many places. At least one home was surrounded by charred land, but the home itself appeared untouched by the fire. In some cases, the fire spread to outbuildings such as sheds and carports, then to the house — leaving small patches of green grass or golden land in between.

And as families deal with the damage done to their homes, many have yet to be reunited with their animals.

“The shelters are full, the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds are full, and the number of animals that died is overwhelming,” said Todd Stosuy, field manager for Santa Cruz County Animal Services. “Some barns were burned, we lost a few horses and a llama — I can’t even count how many (dead) dogs and cats I saw.”

A short distance from Morales’ house on Larkin Valley Road, José Ramos walked around his house to see if anything could be salvaged. Ramos, who has owned the property for 10 years, said he felt his house could have been saved if he’d been allowed into the area.

“I had just left, too. I was sitting on the road out there for four hours. I had tractors, the water, I had everything here. They wouldn’t let me in,” he said. “I could have helped them and told them where the water was. If they’d asked us before they threw us out on the road, they could have saved themselves a lot of headaches.”

Ramos said the house was sold to him by his best friend who had cancer. The friend had wanted him to have the house.

“It’s gone,” he said, “to the waste.”

While many homes along the road were totalled, others — including Castro Adobe, a historic adobe home built in 1848 — were spared from the blaze.

“I drove six-and-a-half hours from Bakersfield to get here when I heard the news,” said



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A massive wall of smoke and fire builds in a strand of trees and brush along Highway 1 Friday as the Trabing Fire roars to full strength.

California firefighters battle hundreds of blazes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — Hundreds of wildfires sparked by lightning flared Sunday across the heart of wine country and remote forests in Northern California, the latest batch of de-

structive blazes in the state.

One had spread across nearly 6 square miles by early Sunday after starting the previous afternoon in Napa County and quickly moving into a mostly rural area of Solano County.

The fire threatened more than 100 buildings as it fed on grassy woodland about 40 miles southwest of Sacramento, said Roger Archey, a spokesman for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or

Cal Fire.

It was 35 percent contained Sunday evening and had destroyed one home, officials said. Evacuations were ordered for some residents, said agency spokeswoman Nancy Carniglia.

Wildfires have destroyed more than 175 homes in Northern California so far this year. California’s unofficial fire season began in mid-May, following the state’s driest two-month period on record.

Chris Barranza, job superintendent for the State of California.

According to Barranza, there were ashes smoldering on the tarp on the house, but he had already torn old, dry shingles

off the house, and cut some trees back, which may have helped prevent the house from catching on fire.

“I came back here,” he said. “My heart is in this.”



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Daniel Leighton (center) is aided by firefighters and others in wrestling a llama out of danger and into a trailer Friday evening as the Trabing Fire raged through more than 600 acres.



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A Cal Fire tanker dumps a load of retardant over a fire that erupted Saturday, triggered by a lightning strike off Larkin Valley Road. Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian



A charred wheelchair stands beside a burned-out home on Larkin Valley Road Saturday. About 2,000 people were evacuated from the Larkin Valley area due to the Trabing Fire.

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