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The fire at the Brookdale Inn & Spa property spread quickly, fire officials said.

# Brookdale Inn fire called 'suspicious'

Brookdale

Power and water may be restored to the historic hotel today

8:20 09

By RAMONA TURNER

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BROOKDALE — Fire investigators say the cause of Tuesday's fire at the Brookdale Inn has not been determined but Wednesday called the blaze that torched 20 apartments, four vehicles and displaced 65 people 'suspicious.'

The county "red-tagged" the entire property on Wednesday, Boulder Creek Fire Chief Kevin McClish said. The rental units that weren't touched by fire had water and smoke damage and are uninhabitable, he added. Electricity and water to the units had been turned off since Tuesday.

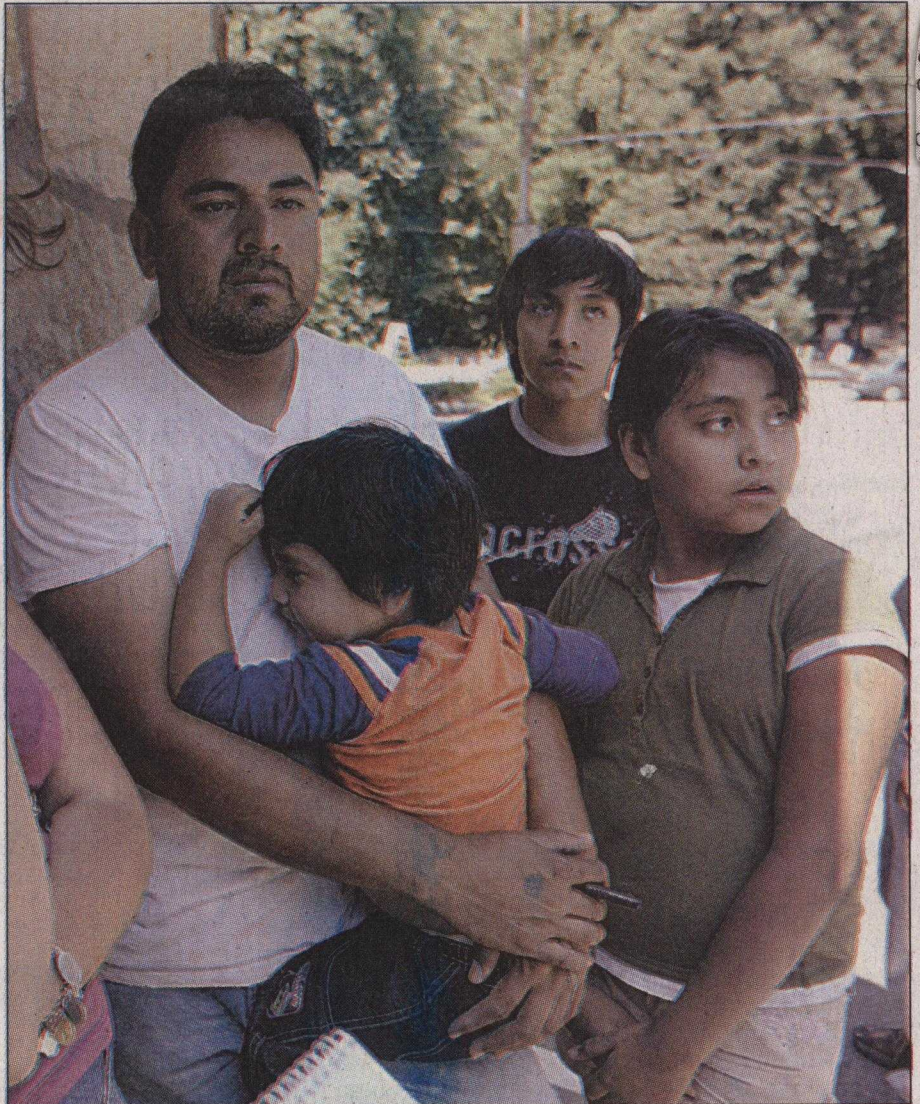
"I anticipate that (Thursday) the Brookroom and dining room should be open for business," McClish said. The hotel rooms also will be able to reopen when power and water are restored. But the apartments damaged by the fire and smoke will remain off limits, he said.

In all, 79 apartments and rooms were closed, McClish said. Of those, 48 rooms are hotel rooms, said Michele Blum, sales manager for the lodge. Not all were inhabited.

The American Red Cross gave evacuees vouchers for hotel rooms, food and clothing, while the Salvation Army had a disaster services food van on the property serving meals and beverages on Wednesday.

The fire broke out just before 5:30 p.m. Tuesday. A hotel guest noticed smoke and flames toward the rear of the 8.5-acre property around 5:20 p.m. said Andy Poon, the lodge's general manager.

"We called 911 and evacuated every-



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Juan Sergio-Moreno and his three children must move from their one-bedroom apartment and find a new home.

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# FIRE

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one first, then informed the guests of what was going on," he said. "The fire was really huge. We're lucky the (Lockheed) Fire is nearby because the fire resources were in the area (and were able) to get to us quickly."

It also was a quick-moving fire, said McClish.

"It moved abnormally fast," he said while pointing toward the building. "It had a center hall-way with apartments on both sides. The fire followed that space in the middle."

Evacuees included five hotel guests and five employees, McClish said. The rest were either family members of employees or other residents.

Juan Sergio-Moreno, 35, was at work at Plant Works in Ben

Lomond when he received a call that the one-bedroom unit with a loft that he rented for \$700 a month was on fire. The single father's three children, ages 3, 10 and 12, were home with friends at the time.

"I was so scared," he said. "All I could think about were my kids. I'm thankful they got out safe."

Sergio-Moreno rushed home to find his children safe and sound, but only with the clothes on their backs and his 3-year-old only with the diaper he was wearing when the fire started. Their apartment of five years — and everything inside it — was a total loss.

Sergio-Moreno and his children stayed with a friend Tuesday night and planned to add their names to the list of people seeking shelter assistance from the Red Cross, he said.

Owner Sanjiv Kakkar could not be reached to comment.



Brookdale Inn & Spa residents displaced by Tuesday's fire gather Wednesday to discuss where they'll go.

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