

LOCKHEED FIRE

Heading home

Fire + Fire Protection

Containment at 65 percent as Bonny Doon evacuees allowed to return

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BONNY DOON — As a light, westerly wind helped ground crews fortify containment lines around the nearly 7,000-acre Lockheed Fire on Sunday, weary residents of Bonny Doon slowly trickled back home Sunday after Cal Fire lifted a mandatory evacuation order and began to shrink the firefighting force.

Incident commanders thought it was safe enough to lift the order because firefighters "are making progress on the control lines," said Battalion Chief Julie Hutchinson, a Cal Fire spokeswoman. "We felt the threat to the community has been mitigated. The fire is not growing."

However, a mandatory evacuation order remains in place for 500 residents of Swanton, where the fire is still burning on steep hillsides. Fire crews spent a large part of the day in the deep forest between Swanton and Bonny Doon mopping up hot spots and continuing to protect structures.

By 10 p.m. Sunday, the wildfire remained at 6,843 acres and was 65 percent contained — an improvement from the 50 percent reported most of the day Sunday. Fire officials said the acreage has not grown since 10 a.m. Saturday morning. Full containment is expected by Thursday.

"The whole plan is to keep getting in there and aggressively getting in containment line," Hutchinson said.

Even as smoke continued to blanket the landscape from Swanton to Santa Cruz, a sense of relief began to set in on Sunday as firefighters seemed to get the better of the blaze, which is the county's largest in at least two decades.

At Swanton Berry Farm Stand, owner Jim Cochran and other local farmers fed several dozen evacuees a feast of barbecue chicken, goat cheese, mushrooms, pasta and salad.

As he sat down to dinner at the farm, Kelly Mitchell, a Big Creek Road resident for 10 years, said, "Swanton has a little community of its own. If you blink, you miss it from the highway. But when it hits the fan, people really help



The smoke from the Lockheed Fire magnifies the sunset over Shaffer Road in Santa Cruz on Sunday.

SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL



SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

Last Chance residents who have stayed with their homes get together to talk and share a meal in their community above Swanton on Sunday.

out."

Up to 2,400 residents had been evacuated since Thursday, though some decided to stay. The Red Cross set up an evacuation center at Vintage Faith Church in

Santa Cruz, where evacuees were initially told at a morning briefing that they could not go home Sunday.

LOCKHEED FIRE BY THE NUMBERS

ACRES BURNING: 6,843

STARTED: 7:15 p.m. Wednesday

CONTAINMENT: 65 percent, estimated full containment Aug. 20

LOCATION: Bonny Doon area — Smith Creek drainage

EVACUATIONS: As of 3 p.m., fire officials lifted the mandatory evacuation of the Bonny Doon area, allowing the residents to return home with proper ID. Residents should remain diligent and continue to drive safe while both fire and law enforcement equipment will still be working in the area. The possibility of evacuation in Bonny Doon still exists. Approximately 500 residents from Swanton area still remain evacuated. Other roads affected include Swanton Road, Swanton View Road, Mill Creek Road, Last Chance Road, Warnella Truck Trail, Rancho Del Oso and Penstock.

CAUSE: Currently under investigation.

ROAD CLOSURES: There were hard road closures Sunday at Empire Grade at Warnella Truck Road, Empire Grade at Ice Cream Grade, Alba Road at Empire Grade, and Bonny Doon at Pine Flat.

STRUCTURES THREATENED: 250 houses. No reports of buildings destroyed but two outbuildings were damaged.

FIRE CREWS: 2,165 firefighters; 28 hand crews; 291 fire engines, 31 dozers, 21 water tenders.

COST: \$8.8 million.

INJURIES: 4

SOURCE: Cal Fire

SEE FIRE ON A4



Cal Fire's Julie Hutchinson tells fire evacuees to keep their fingers crossed for no wind and favorable weather Sunday morning at Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz.

DAN COYRO/SENTINEL



Lily Bartle and her family were among the many Lockheed Fire evacuees to join together for a community meal at Swanton Berry Farm on Sunday.

SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL



Honored for her volunteer work during last year's fires, Mary Sullivan-White has been living on the Graham Hill Horseman's Association grounds with her family, dogs, horses and donkey after the Lockheed Fire forced them from their Bonny Doon home. Although she got the word Sunday afternoon that she could return, she's waiting until this morning to go home.

DAN COYRO/SENTINEL



Swanton Berry Farm is among the many businesses and individuals express of fire and law enforcement personnel working the Lockheed Fire.

FIRE

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When that decision was reversed later in the afternoon, it was music to their ears.

"I feel like a three-day-old fish," Empire Grade resident Trish Virgadamo said as she passed through a checkpoint to return home in her silver sedan.

After last summer's Martin Fire raged near her home, Virgadamo said she didn't hesitate to evacuate this time. She's been staying with friends since Thursday.

Although she is glad to be heading home, she said, "I'll be edgy until everything is contained."

Cal Fire is allowing Bonny Doon residents to return home with proper identification. Law enforcement officers will be posted at the intersections of Alba Road and Empire Grade, Empire Grade and Ice Cream Grade and Bonny Doon and Pine Flat.

Incident commanders felt so confident about the progress made Saturday and Sunday — containment stood at 15 percent on Friday — that they also began demobilizing forces. Hutchinson said five strike teams have been redeployed to fight other blazes in the

state.

The Lockheed Fire began near the Lockheed Martin facility and adjacent Lehi Camp around 7:15 p.m. Wednesday and quickly grew to 2,000 acres. The cause is unknown.

At the Davenport Command Center on Sunday, Cal Fire engineer Paul Provence said the day's game plan was much like Saturday's. Firefighters built more containment line with a focus on the area of Molino Creek Road and Big Creek Road, where they planned to let the unburned vegetation within the fire lines burn itself out.

Monterey City Fire Capt. Guy Pruitt was mopping up Sunday on Mill Creek Road, where he and his team monitored flare-ups and marked fire-scorched trees in the area as a warning to residents that the trees could fall. He said fighting flames on steep inclines for 24 hours at a time is "tedious work."

Four firefighters have suffered minor injuries, but Hutchinson said she could not provide details due to privacy concerns. The current estimated cost of fighting the fire is \$8.8 million so far. Federal funds will cover 75 percent.

Only two outbuildings have burned since the Lockheed Fire erupted five days ago in the tinder-dry forest

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

■ **Evacuation Center:** 350 Mission St. Vintage Church, Mission and King streets, Santa Cruz, run by Red Cross, 332-5144.

■ **To Volunteer:** Call Volunteer Centers of Santa Cruz County at 427-5070.

■ **Animal Services:** Santa Cruz Animal Services is helping with large animal evacuations. For information, call 454-7303. Animals can be retrieved by evacuees starting at 9 a.m. today.

■ **Mail Delivery Curtailed:** Mail delivery to 353 addresses in the 95060 ZIP code has been curtailed. Affected residents with proper identification can pick up their mail at the Santa Cruz Main Post Office on 850 Front St. Customers can call 426-0144 for delivery updates.

region surrounding Swanton. One of them is a shed owned by Mill Creek Road resident Karen Dixon, who was assessing the damage Sunday.

Dixon said the shed contained her husband's construction equipment, as well as granite the couple wanted to use for new counter tops. The two evacuated Thursday but have stopped back in several times to check out their property.

"When it came down to thinking about what to bring with us, none of those things in the shed even entered my mind," Dixon said. "So, it's a minor thing."

As the fire entered its fifth day, evacuees had

been getting antsy about when they could go home. About 40 residents who had to pack up and leave their home gathered at Vintage Faith Church on Mission Street at 9 a.m. Sunday for an update.

Art Weybright, a 73-year-old pharmacist who has lived in his home near Pine Flat Road since 1972, has been staying with his son, a battalion chief for the Central Fire Protection District.

"My son said to consider it a vacation but after three or four days, it's still stressful," he said.

Fire updates are available by calling 335-0378 or at www.fire.ca.gov.



Petaluma firefighters go door-to-door in Bonny Doon checking on homes and



A potted plant stands next to the remains of Karen Dixon's outbuilding that was damaged during the Lockheed Fire.

JEREMIAH RIDGEWAY/SENTINEL





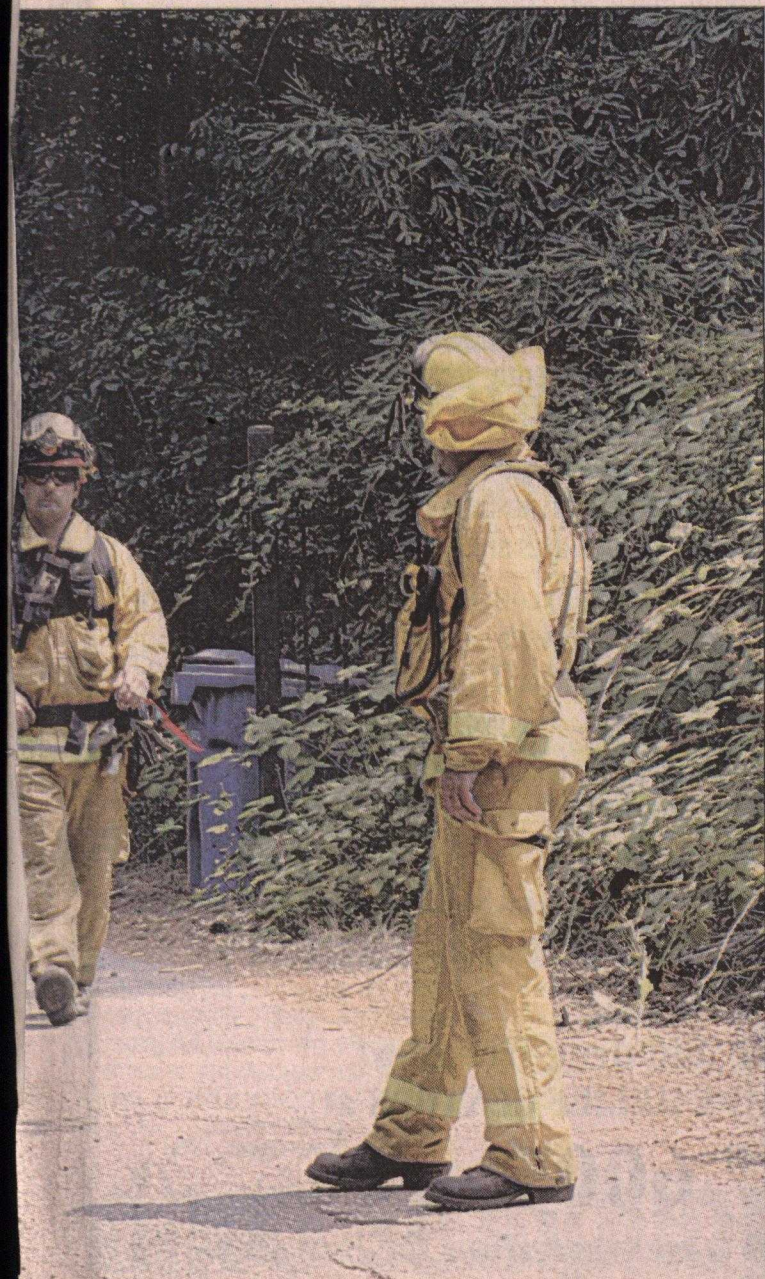
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g their appreciation for the heroic work

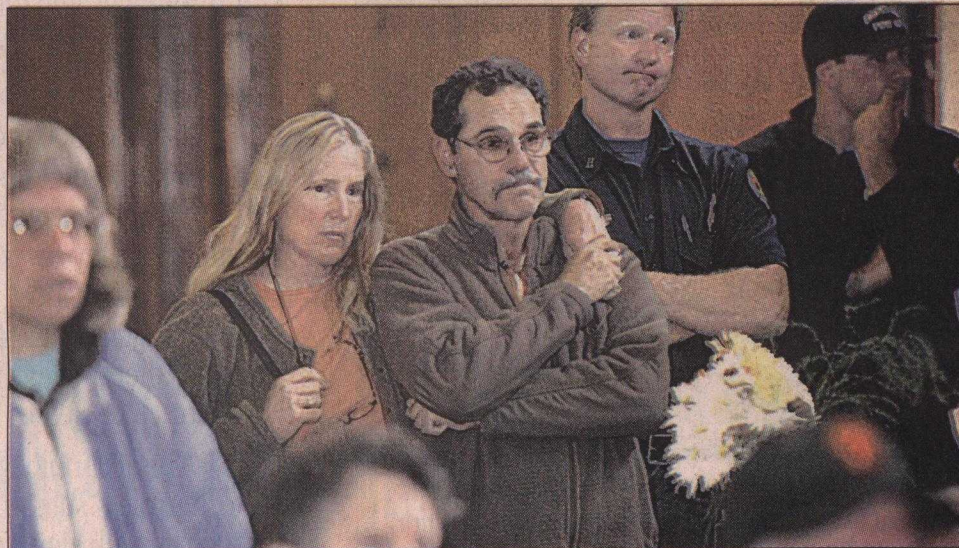


Monterey City firefighters Brian Wilkins and Greg Greenlee survey possible danger areas near Mill Creek Road on Sunday.

JEREMIAH RIDGEWAY/SENTINEL



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL



Worried Bonny Doon residents Laurie Patton and Salem Magarian, displaced by the Lockheed Fire, listen to a Cal Fire spokesman give updates on the fire's progress Sunday at Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz.

DAN COYRO/SENTINEL



Members of the Monterey City Fire Department extinguish a small blaze near Mill Creek Road on Sunday afternoon.

JEREMIAH RIDGEWAY/SENTINEL

the welfare of those who chose to stay.