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Weekend storm offers light show, small fires

An otherwise mild weekend was interrupted Saturday night with bolts of lightning and sudden showers that dropped about half-an-inch of rain over Santa Cruz County.

Lightning was the biggest concern raised by the weekend storm. Thousands of customers in the county were without power Saturday night as PG&E engineers repaired power poles and transformers struck by lightning. Some customers were still without power this morning, but all service should have been restored later today, a PG&E spokesperson said.

At least 10 ground strikes of lightning were recorded by the Central Fire District in the area, causing several spot fires. One small fire was reported on West Del Mar Road and another at Valencia and Ross roads in Aptos. Several lightning strikes and spot fires were also reported in North Monterey County.

The Central Fire District will continue to send small airplanes over the Santa Cruz mountains and other areas today to scan for "sleepers," fires started by smoldering brush.

The California Highway Patrol reported no increase in accidents as a result of the rain, but warned that drivers should take extra precautions as the rainy season continues. One Watsonville woman was injured Saturday after the car she was riding in skidded and crashed head-on with another car on Harkins Slough Road. Antonia Ortiz was taken to Watsonville Community Hospital, where she was treated for minor injuries and released.

The rain caused no landslides or flooding, said public works officials. The loosened soil did, however, cause several trees to fall over, officials said.

—Sophia Tripodes