

LOCKHEED FIRE



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Firefighters set backburns along Molino Creek Farm Road last week. The fire has since been contained, but smoke is expected to linger.

Fire fully contained, officials say

Fire & Fire Prevention - 2000

8-25-09

By KURTIS ALEXANDER

kalexander@santacruzsentinel.com

For the hundreds of firefighters working to tame the Lockheed Fire, reaching the point of 100 percent containment was just another day on the line.

"There's always a sense of accomplishment when this happens," said Cal Fire Captain Tim Gose. "(But) every single day we're making progress."

On Sunday evening, fire authorities announced the nearly 2-week-old blaze was fully contained, meaning the fire is not likely to spread beyond the

7,817 acres it had burned as of Monday and no longer poses a threat to homes or property.

A dozen structures are believed burned by the fire, though none are primary residences, and more than 2,000 residents had been evacuated as the blaze spread from Swanton south toward Bonny Doon. The evacuees have since returned.

The weekend's turning point comes amid ongoing ground and air attacks by fire crews. The efforts have left a safety perimeter around the roughly 10 square miles that have burned, halting

the fire's growth. The fire will continue to burn within these confines with the expectation that it will eventually burn out.

"It's going to take us a week or two or maybe longer (to put it out completely)," said Cal Fire Chief John Ferreira, the head of the county's fire operations.

In the meantime, area residents can continue to expect smoky conditions, though much less so than last week, according to officials with the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District.

"I believe the worst is behind us," said Richard Stedman, air

pollution control officer.

The district, though, has not lifted its air quality advisory for the region and suggests those with heart or lung disease and others sensitive to pollutants consider staying indoors or temporarily relocate.

With full containment, the more than 2,000 firefighting personnel on scene shortly after the blaze began Aug. 12 is now down to 819, fire officials reported Monday. The cost of the firefighting effort has risen to \$26.6 million, they said.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation.