

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 24, 2007

RIVERSIDE AND MORENO VALLEY EDITION

# THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

TODAY: RED-FLAG WARNING 95/55 FORECAST: B12 INLAND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S NEWSPAPER

PE.COM

**THOUSANDS HOMELESS**  
Fire-stricken communities reeling from natural disaster. Complete coverage, **PAGES 3-11**

**ESCAPE FROM DISASTER**  
Tiny Green Valley Lake survives almost being overrun by flames. **PAGE A3**

**STATE OF 'CHAOS'**  
More than a half-million flee homes in largest evacuation in state history. **PAGE A8**

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# NO END IN SIGHT



A helicopter drops a load of water near a home in the path of the Slide Fire as flames moved up the mountainside toward Blue Bird Drive off Highway 18 outside of Running Springs. The fire had destroyed 120 homes in Running Springs by Tuesday night.

## 300 homes gone in mountain areas as flames march on

THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Wind-stoked flames overwhelmed fire crews again Tuesday, raging through dozens of homes in Running Springs and menacing Lake Arrowhead to the east and Highland to the south.

The two-day-old Grass Valley Fire west of Lake Arrowhead, and the Slide Fire, which started near Green Valley Lake, had destroyed at least 300 homes and consumed about 5,000 acres by late Tuesday.

More than 1,000 firefighters fought back Tuesday with a convoy of engines and daylong drops of fire retardant and water from a DC-10 supertanker and other aircraft. Dangerous winds had kept the aircraft on the ground most of Monday.

Despite the airborne help, firefighters had gained little containment on the two fires by late Tuesday.

"Obviously, the winds are the biggest problem," said Bob Poole, a U.S. Forest Service spokesman. "They are very erratic. They seem to change every few minutes."

The Slide Fire, the top priority for firefighters in that area, left behind new expanses of burned-out homes and black matchstick trees. The blaze leveled homes in Running Springs and in the community of Fredalpa to the west. Another arm of fire attacked a ridge east of town.

SEE **FOCUS/A5**

## Inland area a haven for evacuees

BY SEAN NEALON, AARON BURGIN AND ROCKY SALMON  
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Southwest Riverside County on Tuesday played host to hundreds of fire evacuees escaping a blanket of deep gray smoke from fires in Riverside and San Diego counties that have scorched thousands of acres and destroyed hundreds of homes.

Displaced residents filled hotels and evacuation centers in southwest Riverside County. Commuters traveled a reopened Interstate 15, but under an orange glow from fires burning on adjacent hillsides.

Area school districts called in extra substitute teachers, replacing some teachers who lost homes.

Lake Elsinore was closed and  
SEE **'SPIRITS'/A4**



STAN LIM/THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Nurse Lori Betcher holds a 1-day-old baby as he and his mother, Leah Diaz, are evacuated from Mountains Community Hospital.

## Wildfires' epic ruin blamed on heat, drought, wind, people

BY MICHELLE DeARMOND AND JULIA GLICK  
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Southern California is no stranger to wildfires, but in this round, an exceptional number of fires have caused extraordinary destruction, experts say.

Fire crews are struggling to beat back the flames blowing across canyons and mountainsides, and hundreds of thou-

sands of Southern Californians in seven counties have fled their homes.

"We have had an unfortunate situation that we have three things come together: very dry areas, very hot weather and then a lot of wind," Gov. Schwarzenegger said during a news conference Tuesday in Lake Arrowhead. "And so this makes

SEE **BLAME/A8**



The Slide Fire burns above Highland as seen from a vantage point on Boulder Avenue in Redlands.

PAUL ALVAREZ/  
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

## MORE FIRE COVERAGE

**IN BUSINESS**  
**MARKET WATCH:** Fire can mean boom or bust for businesses. **E1**  
**IN YOUR LIFE**  
**GETTING OUT:** What items should you grab first? **D1**  
**IN SPORTS DAY**  
**NO GAMES:** Some Inland schools put off events. **C1**  
**CHARGERS:** Evacuees move into stadium. **C1**

**ON THE WEB**  
**AIRPORTS:** Fires kept some air traffic controllers from coming to work but airports were unaffected.  
**IN PERIL:** Wildfire can pose special dangers to mobile home residents.  
**OUTSIDE HELP:** Officers come from distant jurisdictions to help provide law enforcement.

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