

# RECORD Searchlight

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 24, 2007 REDDING, CALIFORNIA

47 CENTS



Richard Hartog / Los Angeles Times

**ALL ORANGE:** A firefighter sprays water as wildfires burned in Running Springs near Lake Arrowhead early Tuesday. Firefighters are battling at least a dozen fires across Southern California.

**12** fires burning    **600** square miles burned    **1,800** homes destroyed    **68,000** homes threatened    **350,000** homes evacuated    **1** dead    **45** injured

All numbers are estimates by The Associated Press as of Tuesday night.

# 'THE PERFECT STORM'

## Conditions ripe for blazes that have displaced SoCal residents

By **Martha Mendoza**  
Associated Press

RUNNING SPRINGS — Serious drought, tree-killing bark beetles and truck-flipping winds. Southern Californians have known for years they were living with the ingredients for devastating wildfires, but this time they are mixing with such violence it shocks people who thought they had seen it all.

More than 350,000 homes had been evacuated by Tuesday. There is so much fire, moving so fiercely, that firefighters often had to throw out their playbook and let the blazes burn.

In the San Bernardino Mountains east of Los Angeles, Running Springs firefighter Steve Dvorak rubbed smoke-sore eyes as he watched a crew spray water on a small wooden home they were not going to save. Around him, dozens more were in flames or already reduced to smoldering foundations.

"We've been thinking about this for the last five years, but it's still unbelievable. I've never seen anything like it," he said.

More than a dozen wildfires with tentacles of unpredictable,

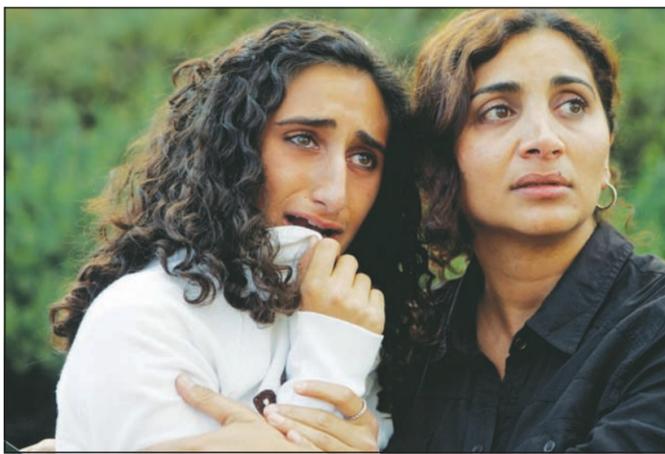
shifting flame have burned across nearly 600 square miles, killing one person, destroying more than 1,800 homes and prompting evacuations on the scale of a major hurricane from north of Los Angeles, through San Diego to the Mexican border. Forty-five people have been injured, including at least 21 firefighters.

More than 200 homes were burned in Running Springs and Lake Arrowhead, where retired resident Kim Wurm refused to evacuate. She said she stayed to protect her home and those of her friends, but that she had never seen such devastation in 25 years in "fire country."

"It's like a bomb went off. It's like shock and awe," she said.

About 1,400 homes, businesses and other buildings burned in San Diego County, where one person died. Another 530 homes in San Diego County were reported damaged.

In Rancho Santa Fe, a suburb north of San Diego, houses burned just yards from where fire crews fought to contain flames engulfing other properties. Groves of euca-



Damian Dovarganes / Associated Press

**SPECTATORS:** Randa Najjar, right, hugs her daughter Shareen, 14, as they look from a vantage point in Portola Hills as a wildfire approaches their Santiago Canyon States home.

lyptus trees exploded in the heat in one ritzy cul-de-sac, sending off a scattered popping that sounded like machine gun fire.

Based on census and other data, in San Diego County, about 560,000 people were ordered to leave, said Ron Roberts, chairman of the San Diego Board of Supervisors. Thousands more were evacuated in San Bernardino, Los Angeles and Orange counties.

By Tuesday evening, some 50,000 people in San Diego were being al-

lowed to return to homes near the ocean as well as portions of the city of Poway, Roberts said. No homes were lost in these neighborhoods.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said the flames were threatening 68,000 more homes.

"We have had an unfortunate situation that we've had three things come together: very dry areas, very hot weather and then a

## North state fire personnel travel south to assist

By **Ryan Sabalow**  
Record Searchlight

"Blackened."

That's the word two north state firefighters used Tuesday to describe the destruction that wildfires have caused in Southern California, scorching countless acres, burning hundreds of homes and sending a half-million people fleeing for their lives.

"The whole mountain range is black from one side of the valley to the other side of the valley," said Battalion Chief Chuck Dahlen of the Shasta Lake Fire Protection District. "The only thing that's green is the homes they saved."

Dahlen is one of at least 500 north state firefighters, support staff and disaster relief volunteers who've traveled to the San Diego area to help a force that has been stretched to the breaking point.

About 375,000 acres were ablaze Tuesday afternoon, The Associated Press reported. Many of the fires

See **FIRE**, A-5

See **PERSONNEL**, A-5

### THREE SITES LOCATED DOWNTOWN

## Supervisors support courthouse locales

By **Kimberly Ross**  
Record Searchlight

Any one of three downtown sites would be a better place for a future Shasta County courthouse than land offered more than a mile away on Parkview Avenue, Shasta County supervisors agreed Tuesday.

They voted to send a letter to the state Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) the same day with offers to donate portions of three downtown parcels that the county owns for a courthouse.

Those possible sites, in addition to a 4-acre Parkview softball field the city of Redding has offered to donate, increases Shasta County's chances for being chosen to get a fully state-funded courthouse built on one of them, County Administrative Officer Larry Lees said.

"We are reaffirming our commitment to provide the land," Lees said, referring to a similar decision that supervisors made in March.

In exchange, the county is asking the state to return ownership of the existing courthouse's second and third floors to the county, Lees said. Courtrooms there could be converted into a new sheriff's and district attorney's office if they are displaced by a new courthouse. The state's Judicial Council could determine late this week whether Shasta County will be among those communities chosen for a new courthouse. Adding a 26-room courthouse is expected to cost about \$106 million, including a parking garage.

County supervisors agreed with arguments reiterated Tuesday by

See **COURTHOUSE**, A-7

The Weather Geek is on vacation. He'll return next week.

### WEATHER



Very warm and sunny  
High: 85 Low: 48  
See **B-6**

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### GOOD MORNING!

R-S subscriber Donald Howard

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North state news as it happens



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Possible courthouse sites downtown.

Phil Fountain / Record Searchlight