



John Goodman

A fire crew works on the steadily burning roadside.

Tenuous Remission for Parts of Gap Fire

No Structures Burned, but Danger Remains

Friday, July 4, 2008

By [Ben Preston](#) ([Contact](#))

Although the Gap Fire raged for much of this evening, the early morning hours have seen calmer winds and lower flames. At 3:00 a.m., about 1,000 houses were still under a mandatory evacuation order, which had been in effect since 8:40 p.m. The evacuation covered Painted Cave, Hidden Valley, the Trout Club, West Camino Cielo Road—west of Highway 154, including Kinevan Road and the Haney Tract—and Glen Annie and La Patera Canyons, which have been closed since Wednesday. One resident on Glen Annie Road who opted to ignore the evacuation notice had a huge sign at the end of the driveway reading “Cookies – Drinks for Fire Fighters” posted above a box of Vitamin Water, bottled water, and individually wrapped packets of cookies.

[This map is interactive; click on points or overlays for more info, click plus and minus to zoom in or out, move around by click-hold-and-drag, etc. For larger map, click here.](#)

Despite the diminishing brightness on the horizon viewed from points south, flames still licked the sides of Glen Annie Road, having already burned past Southern California Edison’s substation and most of the area around the Goleta Water District’s treatment plant at the road’s northern terminus. In the dark, the canyon beyond looked apocalyptic, with a blanket of persistent smoke from smoldering trees and brush rolling along the valley floor. Once in a while, a lone tree would burst into flame, and some of the stands of vegetation along the roadside were burning steadily. Fire crews in the area worked as steadily though, and even with the occasional gust of wind, the fire didn’t seem to have the same immediacy that it did yesterday. However, it seems that we’re not out of the woods yet, so to speak. “I don’t feel that this is over yet,” said Curtis Vincent, a public information officer from the U.S. Forest Service. “I think we still have a few more days of this left.”



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Treats for the weary warrior.

Consensus seems to be that hope lies with the wind remaining calm until the fire can be contained. As of 6 p.m.—the last report available—the fire was 16 percent contained, with 2,400 acres believed to have been burned. No reports of structure damage or destruction have been made, although 647 residences were reported as threatened. Currently, 753 personnel from myriad agencies are working on the fire, and officials expect more to arrive by 8 a.m. Once again, the buzz of aircraft, which have been frantically dropping retardant on the fire for the past two days, will be heard once again at daybreak.

Workers from Southern California Edison have been asserting themselves as unflaggingly as the fire crews, keeping burning power lines repaired, and restoring power to all but 170 South Coast residents. “Because this is a slow moving fire, it sits under the lines and does a lot of damage,” said Cathy Hart, an Edison public affairs officer. A 220 kilovolt line running through a particularly bad area of the fire has been a constant problem, as the strain put on the smaller 66 kilovolt line has been the cause of the rolling blackouts experienced by many area residents. Of the 170 still without power—all within Goleta—150 of the outages were caused when a car hit a power line pole. That was reported at 10:30 p.m. though, and at 2 a.m., Hart surmised that the problem may have already been corrected. Also, since southern Santa Barbara County is the northern end of Edison’s reach, the South Coast cannot receive power from points north. Pacific Gas and Electric, which administers power from Gaviota north, does not have a grid that is interconnected with Southern California Edison’s.



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A vision of hell in a canyon at the end of Glen Annie Road.

Last night, only one evacuee showed up at the American Red Cross Evacuation Center at San Marcos High School, where 300 cots and two relief trailers were available. Tonight, however, 93 people—and about 16 dogs, cats, and rabbits—slumbered quietly on cots in the high school’s gymnasium and cafeteria. Six volunteers manned the night shift to attend to the evacuees’ needs, and Sheriff’s deputies regularly patrolled the area in cars and on foot to ensure their safety. Jason Stein, who works as a security guard at Pacifica Real Estate, lives near Mountain View School, in one of the evacuated houses. “I got off work at 1:30 [a.m.] to find that I couldn’t get to my house,” he said. Fortunately, his grandparents had told him of the shelter, so he had a place to go for the night. Unfortunately, the Red Cross’ superhuman efforts to provide creature comforts for the evacuees were a bit constrained by natural limitations. Having brought in six large fans to cool the sleeping areas, they found that they could not be used due to the high amount of soot in the outside air. While not unbearable, the gymnasium was stuffy, and many people could be seen sleeping in shorts and T-shirts, without blankets.

