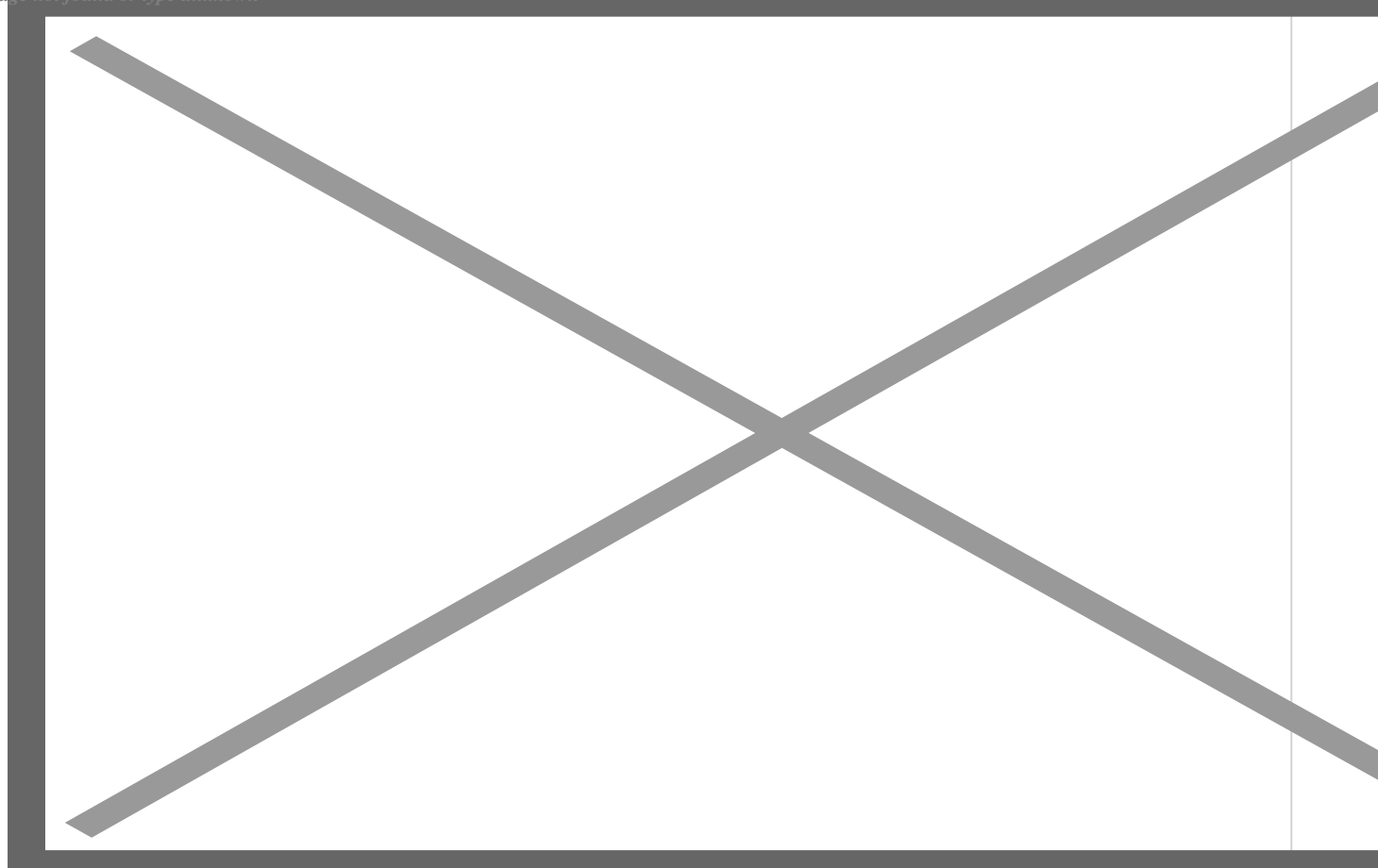


Raging wildfire in southern California triples in size, forcing evacuations

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A firefighter helps to set counter-fires in San Bernardino County, California, US. (File photo)

Sacramento, September 9 (RHC)-- A raging wildfire outside Los Angeles in the U.S. state of California has forced massive evacuations, spreading to 23,919 acres with five percent containment, according to reports. Thousands of people have been ordered to evacuate around the affected areas with the growing blaze snatching two lives.

Tropical Storm Kay is expected to bring winds of more than 50 mph to the fire area, which could mean further explosive growth and unpredictable fire behavior. "Active fire behavior occurred in the east, south, and north portions of the incident," the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) said on Thursday.

"Fire will become active with primary movement to the east. Steep drainages will aid the spread with the up canyon/upslope winds and heavy fuels," it added. The blaze, which erupted on Monday, continues to spread due to temperatures repeatedly exceeding 43 Celsius in parts of California, Nevada, and Arizona.

"The state and much of the West is enduring a historically long and record-breaking heat wave, straining the grid from high electricity use," reported California Independent Service Operator, which controls the flow of high-voltage electric power lines.

Officials said consumer conservation efforts so far have been key to helping manage operations. They urged consumers to continue consuming less power to avoid blackouts.

The weather forecasters expect the heat wave to begin to dissipate over the coming days but warned California was not out of the woods yet.

"Dangerous heat also continues to impact the Golden State as high temperatures are once again forecast to reach well into the triple digits both today and Friday, particularly over interior valley regions," the National Weather Service said.

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