

Rain helps California firefighters combat blaze, ends brutal heat wave

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A firefighter guides the brush rigs while fighting the Mosquito fire at Volcanoville, California, US, September 9, 2022. (Reuters photo)

Los Angeles, September 12 (RHC)-- A tropical storm off the Pacific Coast brought cooler temperatures and much needed rain to Southern California on Saturday, ending a scorching heat wave and easing fears that a massive wildfire could threaten more residents.

Officials had warned that high winds from the remnants of Tropical Storm Kay could fan the flames of the Fairview Fire, which as of Friday had consumed about 27,000 acres in Riverside County, east of Los Angeles, and was only 5% contained. Heavy rain from the storm, meanwhile, raised the possibility of flash flooding and mudslides.

But steady rain helped firefighters make significant progress overnight, according to Rob Roseer, a spokesman for Cal Fire, the state's firefighting agency. As of 10:50 a.m. (1750 GMT), the fire was 40% contained, and there were no reports of flash flooding or debris flows, Roseer said. "Thankfully, the rain from Tropical Storm Kay came through earlier than expected and provided a lot of relief for firefighters," he said.

Thousands of residents have been ordered to leave their homes, though some people who live west and northwest of the fire have been allowed to return since Friday, Roseer said. Two people have died as a result of the fire.

The Mosquito Fire east of the state capital of Sacramento continued expanding overnight, however. As of Saturday morning, the blaze had burned through more than 33,000 acres and was 0% contained, Cal Fire said.

Highs in southern California were mostly expected to stay under 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 degrees Celsius), according to forecasters, after days of oppressive heat across much of the state. Temperatures hit a record 101 degrees at Los Angeles International Airport on Friday, the National Weather Service said. Officials had considered implementing rolling electricity outages earlier in the week, when power demand hit an all-time high.

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