



August 21, 2020

1900hrs

## **CZU August Lightning Complex Fire**

San Mateo County Residents and  
Fire Safe SMC Members,

In the early morning hours of August 16th the Bay Area experienced a lightning event like nothing we have ever seen. Multiple strikes hit the ground of our western hills and ignited small vegetation fires in some of the highest risk areas of San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties. At daylight firefighters scrambled in both counties to extinguish what they could find and gain access to. The ongoing heat wave, with day time temperatures soaring into the 100s and Rh continuing to be extremely low, only exacerbated the situation. Night time temperatures were exceptionally warm and the marine layer unfortunately never came.

The CZU August Lightning Complex Fires have been erratic and have grown significantly in size at an unprecedented rate. On August 18<sup>th</sup> the fires cumulative burn area was 2,000 acres with -0- containment on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 10,000 acres with -0- containment on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 40,000 acres with -0- containment and by 1800hrs on August 21<sup>th</sup>, 57,000 acres with just -2%- containment.

This fire comes as no surprise considering the amount of lightning activity we experienced, the type of terrain involved and the most unfortunate circumstance, the lack of firefighting resources available to fight this fire. Firefighters and equipment are stretched extremely thin across the state with over 28 active wildfires listed on the Cal Fire web site.

Every day multiple evacuations orders are added and cars filled with residents and their personal belongings as well as trucks and horse trailers fill the narrow winding roads fleeing the effected area. A new evacuation program called **Zonehaven**

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/f0121f7f2f0941afb3ed70529b2cee75>

has been in development for quite a while and was scheduled to be officially launched in the coming weeks when it was immediately initiated with the first round of evacuation orders by Cal Fire and the SMC and SCC Sheriff Offices. There are four evacuation centers open for residents of Santa Cruz and San Mateo Counties: Half Moon Bay High School, 1 Lewis Foster Drive, Half Moon Bay, San Mateo Events Center, 1346 Saratoga Dr. San Mateo, Santa Cruz County Fairground, 2601 E. Lake Ave. Watsonville and Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium, 307 Church St. Santa Cruz.

The latest Cal Fire bulletin stated 20 structures have been destroyed with over 24,000+ more threatened. Cal Fire described the fire behavior as extremely erratic and something not even their 30+ year veterans had experienced before. One hundred foot redwood trees were literally exploding and the sound of the consumption was comparable to a freight train. The rate of spread was unprecedented and significant increase in the size of the fire is predicted before containment.

Please sign up to receive digital Cal Fire messages <https://tinyurl.com/CZUlightning> which include daily updates on the fire and evacuations orders.

We encourage all residents that if you are in an evacuation zone to leave immediately. Residents in surrounding neighborhoods should stay vigilant and monitor local news, radio, CAL Fire websites and make sure you are signed up for San Mateo County's emergency notification system, <https://hsd.smcsheriff.com/smcalert> and/or Santa Cruz County's emergency notification system <http://scr911.org/>. During these incidents have your cell phone or computer available to check for updates and emergency evacuation alerts often.

We appreciate all the efforts of the first responders and volunteers who are working beyond human capabilities to contain this wildfire and assist residents with evacuating.

**Fire Area Map** <https://maps.nwcg.gov/sa/#/%3F%3F/37.6144/-122.136/10>

**Fire Video** <https://www.dropbox.com/s/75lkl3trs9oboab/Butano%20Ridge%20Fire%208-18-20.m4v?dl=0>

Be Safe Everyone

Denise Enea  
Fire Safe SMC, President