

Cooler weather helps crews battling California wildfire

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Lower Lake, California: Cooler weather helped crews build a buffer Monday between a raging Northern California wildfire and some of the thousands of homes it threatened as it tore through drought-withered brush that hadn't burned in years.

At least two dozen homes were destroyed over the past few days, and more than 13,000 people were urged to flee.

The fire — the largest blaze in drought-stricken California roughly tripled in size over the weekend to 93 square miles (240 sq. kilometers), generating its own winds that fueled the flames and reduced thousands of acres of manzanita shrubs and other brush to barren land in hours.

Lower temperatures and higher humidity allowed firefighters to contain more of the fire in the Lower Lake area, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) north of San Francisco, said CalFire Capt. Don Camp.

Numerous other wildfires in California, Washington state and Oregon took off as the effects of drought and summer heat turned the West Coast combustible.

California blazes killed a firefighter last week and injured four others over the weekend in different areas.

Crews in the Lower Lake area conducted controlled burns, setting fire to shrubs to rob the blaze of fuel and protect some of 5,500 homes under threat. The fire is burning in a rural area of grasslands and steep hills.

More than 13,000 people have been forced from their homes or have been advised to leave. The fire has destroyed at least 24 homes and 26 outbuildings.

Crews battled 20 other wildfires in California some sparked by lightning — though none was as big as the Lower Lake blaze.

- AP