

Calistoga evacuated, fire death toll at 23



The fires in the Wine Country continue to destroy homes and businesses. Photo/CalFire

By Ryan Lillis, Molly Sullivan And Marjie Lundstrom, Sacramento Bee

Wildfires continued to lay siege to huge swaths of Northern California on Wednesday, forcing the evacuations of thousands from iconic Wine Country towns like Calistoga and destroying thousands of homes and businesses in what Gov. Jerry Brown said was one of the worst fire events in state history.

Nearly two dozen huge fires had burned 170,000 acres since Sunday, and firefighters were bracing for heavy wind gusts through Thursday afternoon that they feared could wreak havoc after years of drought.

“We are literally looking at explosive vegetation,” CalFire Director Ken Pimlott said Wednesday, as 8,000 firefighters worked for the third straight day trying to corral fires that have killed at least 23 people and left hundreds missing. “These fires are burning actively during the day and at night,

when you would expect the fire to subside.

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