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'Is this really happening?': Your wildfire stories

FirstPerson: Your accounts of surviving the Southern California blazes

msnbc.com
updated 12:18 p.m. CT, Thurs., Oct. 25, 2007

'The sky is falling'

"Is this really happening?" Surreal would be the best way to describe my situation. I can see the flames and experience the weather, but am one of the lucky Southern Californians whose house isn't in grave danger. Nonetheless I think it's a general consensus that everyone's life has been affected immensely in such a short time. I was just at a BBQ in the currently evacuated Foothill Ranch last Sunday afternoon. Today I have to hold my breath every time I run out to my car. Besides a canceled midterm, life is inching on day by day. However, as I drive down the 405 freeway, the Orange County landscape is alight with the glowing blaze. My house, a few miles from the fires, is encompassed by smoke and ash; it literally looks like "the sky is falling."

While sitting in class it takes a bit longer, but my mind is eventually focused on the subject. Then I step outside back to the grim reality that is Southern California. The Orange County bubble has burst and has turned what was once considered, by some, one of the most desirable places to live is now matted by a morbid grey ash. Reading through the news I have seen comparisons to other disasters such as Hurricane Katrina or 9/11. Witnessing these events on TV, it was impossible to grasp what people were going through. Even now this eerie feeling that accompanies me everywhere leaves a surreal picture in my mind. I can see the disasters firsthand, but know there are millions in much worse situations than my own. I can't even imagine what San Diego is going through, my thoughts and prayers are with you and everyone in the Southland. -Emily Luiz Student, UC Irvine
--Emily Luiz, Lake Forest, CA (submitted on Oct. 25, 2007)

FirstPerson video



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FirstPerson: Attacking the fire

Msnbc.com user Trish Pena sent in this home video of a helicopter fighting the San Miguel fire in Southern California.

FirstPerson

Slide show



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California wildfires

Firefighters gain the upper hand and residents survey the destruction

California wildfires

Dangerous air

Oct. 27: With wildfires still burning, more and more Californians now have to worry about the air they breathe. NBC's Martin Savidge reports.



Californians start over

Another embarrassment for FEMA

Wildfire victim: 'It's pretty heartbreaking'

Schwarzenegger warns against wildfire fraud

Pres. Bush: 'We know how tough it is'