

# 80 Killed in California Wildfires as Nearly 1K Remain Missing: 'It's a Disheartening Situation'



Marcus Yam /Los Angeles Times/Getty

The death toll in a string of California wildfires continued to rise this week as authorities made progress in containing the deadliest blaze in the northern part of the state. Now, authorities are struggling to learn the whereabouts of nearly 1,000 people missing since the fires broke out.

On Sunday, the Camp Fire in northern California was 65 percent contained after spreading across 150,000 acres. Butte County officials announced that 77 people had died so far as a result of the fire. Meanwhile, the Woolsey Fire near Los Angeles was 91 percent contained — after burning through more than 96,000 acres — on Sunday and has led to three deaths. Ventura County's Hill Fire was completely contained on Friday.

Although it looks like the end of the blazes may be drawing near, CalFire officials announced that the Camp Fire likely won't be contained until Nov. 30. Meanwhile, identifying those who died in the Camp Fire will be difficult.

"We're finding remains in various states," Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea said, according to the *Sacramento Bee*. "I suspect there are some that will have been completely consumed."



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Honea said that collecting a single victim could take hours, as search and rescue teams work to make sure no body part is left behind for grieving relatives to find.

"There is certainly the unfortunate possibility that even after we've searched an

area, once people get back in there, it's possible that human remains could be found," Honea said, according to the *Bee*. "I know that's a very difficult thing to think about, but that's the difficult situation we find ourselves in today."

Honea said in a statement shared on social media that 67 of the 77 victims have been "tentatively" identified. He noted that 993 people remain unaccounted for. Smoke from the fires has decreased air quality in parts of the state, and although some much-needed rain is forecast in parts of the state this week, Honea has said the weather could make it harder to find human remains.



Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post/Getty

"It's a disheartening situation," Honea said, according to CBS News. "As much as I wish we could get through this before the rains come, I don't know if that's possible."

Many gathered for a vigil at First Christian Church in Chico — the town where many Paradise residents have taken refuge since the blaze, according to CBS. They prayed, presented photos of lost friends and family and sought help from counselors and mental health experts. A sign at the vigil read: "We will rise from the ashes #paradisestrong #buttecountystrong."

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Meanwhile, families of missing Paradise residents are awaiting word about the fate of their loved ones.



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"We're being patient just because we know we're not the only family that's going through this right now," Sadia Quint told CNN. "So everyone's kind of in it together and everyone's being really supportive."

Quint doesn't know what happened to her uncle, David William Marbury, who lived in Paradise.

"We already know that his house has been burned down and his car was in his garage," Quint told CNN. "So now we're just waiting for the sheriff's department to go out there and let us know if his body's in there or not."

***To help victims of the California wildfires, visit the Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation, the California Fire Foundation and the American Red Cross, for more information.***

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