

New Evacuations Ordered As Wildfires Continue to Burn Across the Carolina's

Families are being forced to leave their homes as massive wildfires continue to burn across Upstate South Carolina and the mountains of western North Carolina.

Dry conditions and millions of trees knocked down by Hurricane Helene last year have created the perfect storm for a long and dangerous fire season, according to Robert Scheller, a forestry and environmental resources professor at N.C. State University. Scheller previously warned that if the region experienced dry weather following the hurricane, fire risks would be significantly heightened.

Both North and South Carolina are currently under a burn ban to help prevent further fire outbreaks. Meanwhile, local governments are stepping in to assist those affected. South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster announced on March 24 that FEMA approved a Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) to support firefighting efforts in the Upstate.

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In Pickens County, a fire at the top of Table Rock State Park was ignited on March 21 due to negligence by four teenage hikers, according to the sheriff's office. The fire, which started around 5:45 p.m., briefly trapped other hikers in the area, but they managed to escape unharmed.

As of now, the fire has spread to more than 1,156 acres and remains completely uncontained. Approximately 100 homes east of Table Rock State Park remain under voluntary evacuation orders, though no additional evacuations have been issued.

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“Wildfires in Polk County are spreading into Henderson County, and additional evacuation information is available below. My office remains in regular contact with local officials and continues to keep a close watch on the situation. Lifting a prayer for our first responders who are working tirelessly to keep folks safe,” Congressman Chuck Edwards said on X.

Table Rock State Park has shut down all trail systems, White Oaks Campground, Lake Oolenoy, Lake Pinnacle, and all day-use areas until further notice. Officials are urging residents and motorists to avoid the burn area due to thick smoke along SC Highway 11.

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In Greenville County, firefighters are battling another wildfire that erupted on March 22 in the Mountain Bridge Wilderness area, located between Caesars Head State Park and Jones Gap State Park. The Persimmon Ridge Fire has now consumed 314 acres and remains at 0% containment.

Earlier, the South Carolina Forestry Commission announced voluntary evacuations northeast of the fire, but later corrected that no evacuations are currently planned for residents east or south of the blaze.

Fire crews from multiple agencies are working around the clock to contain the wildfires as conditions remain volatile. Residents are urged to stay alert and follow any official guidance as the situation continues to unfold.

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