

# Quarry Park Eucalyptus Crown Fire An Accident Waiting to Happen ?



# Background

The Paradise fire brought home the devastation caused by high winds, hot temperatures and low humidity.

Quarry Park is more than 1/2 square mile of eucalyptus that could make El Granada a synonym for Paradise.

I started this slideshow after a 2017 trip to Portugal where my wife and I saw how closely the area resembled home, with its eucalyptus and broom. A month later massive wild fires killed 60 people in the area we had travelled through.

The last time El Granada had a major fire was in late November 1929 when a wildfire raged from Pescadero to Montara.

**So far, we have been fortunate, but we cannot  
continue to rely on luck!**

# Montara / El Granada - 1929

## MONTARA WIPED OUT BY FIRE; FLAMING WALL SWEEPS INLAND

25 HOMES, CHURCH, CATTLE  
BURN; 6 FIRES RING COUNTY  
AS RED CROSS RUSHES AID

Clashes of several San Mateo counties were played on three sides by flames today as great brush fires raged outward over the outskirts of the surrounding San Mateo mountains, after rapidly wiping out one town after another.

Montara has a score of houses here made homeless, nearly 50 houses, a church, and other public buildings have been destroyed, while here burned to death in fiery bursts, and damage estimated at more than \$100,000 has been done. Eighteen houses were destroyed at Montara, as everywhere they, saving only the standing walls of the town.

Nearly a thousand men, recruited from highways, cities, and ranches were on the front.

The fire to the north and west of San Mateo and Burlingame, beyond of the ridge throughout the county, was being fought back today from the Skyline by means of a property of the Spring Valley Water company, while another massive flame, starting last night in Pescadero valley, was within two miles of the San Mateo County Memorial park, blazing through great redwoods after having swept to within half a mile of the north-west corner of Pescadero.

**FIRE RAGES AUTO**  
Flaming before the flames to North region as Monterey last night, Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Wagner and Mrs. Blanche Barry, mother of Mrs. Wagner, saved their lives while the fire, rising a mile and a half, surrounded their automobile in a race to Montara. Five men, equipped with their automobiles in a race to Montara, were seen to drive away from the town of Montara, and were seen to drive away from the town of Montara, and were seen to drive away from the town of Montara.

**L. A. OPENS BIG DRIVE TO GET**  
At the time of the fire, the fire was seen to drive away from the town of Montara, and were seen to drive away from the town of Montara, and were seen to drive away from the town of Montara.

PUBLISHED DAILY  
**San Mateo Times**  
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AND DAILY NEWS LEADER

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TWELVE PAGES

Number 120

## S. M. CALLS ON ARMY

**CLEMENCEAU ON DEATHBED,  
SCORNS DEATH,  
MOCKS FOES**

Dr. Will and Quaintance of "Hans" of France Made  
With Service in Day  
**DOUGLASS FEAR THE FEAR**  
Montana Says Secret Plans to  
Kill Him, He Says

**Better Shop  
Before Noon,  
Wives Warned**

Montana says secret plans to kill him, he says  
Montana says secret plans to kill him, he says  
Montana says secret plans to kill him, he says

**LOGGING ROADS  
ONLY NEED OF  
NORTH CALIF.  
IS S. P. CLAIM**

Great Northern Stationer in  
Early University De-  
clared, Eugene  
**NEWS TO ASSOCIATES**  
Says Irregular in Suppression

**HIGH SCHOOL CLOCK DRAWS  
FIRE OF S. M. HEIGHTS CLUB**

Firemen yesterday morning  
yesterday morning  
yesterday morning

**SHERIFF ASKS  
SOLDIERS' AID  
FIGHTING FIRE  
NEAR BELMONT**

Firemen fighting blaze in  
North Bay on Highway  
Belmont is endangered

## SEVERAL RESCUED

Two men fell head first into the flames after being overcome by smoke, but were dragged to safety by companions. In coast side towns virtually all able-bodied men and boys, as well as some women, were on the fire lines from Montara on the north to Miramar on the south. At Moss Beach, only one man and one woman remained in the town, the woman reporting the progress of the flames and the man standing guard to protect against flying embers.

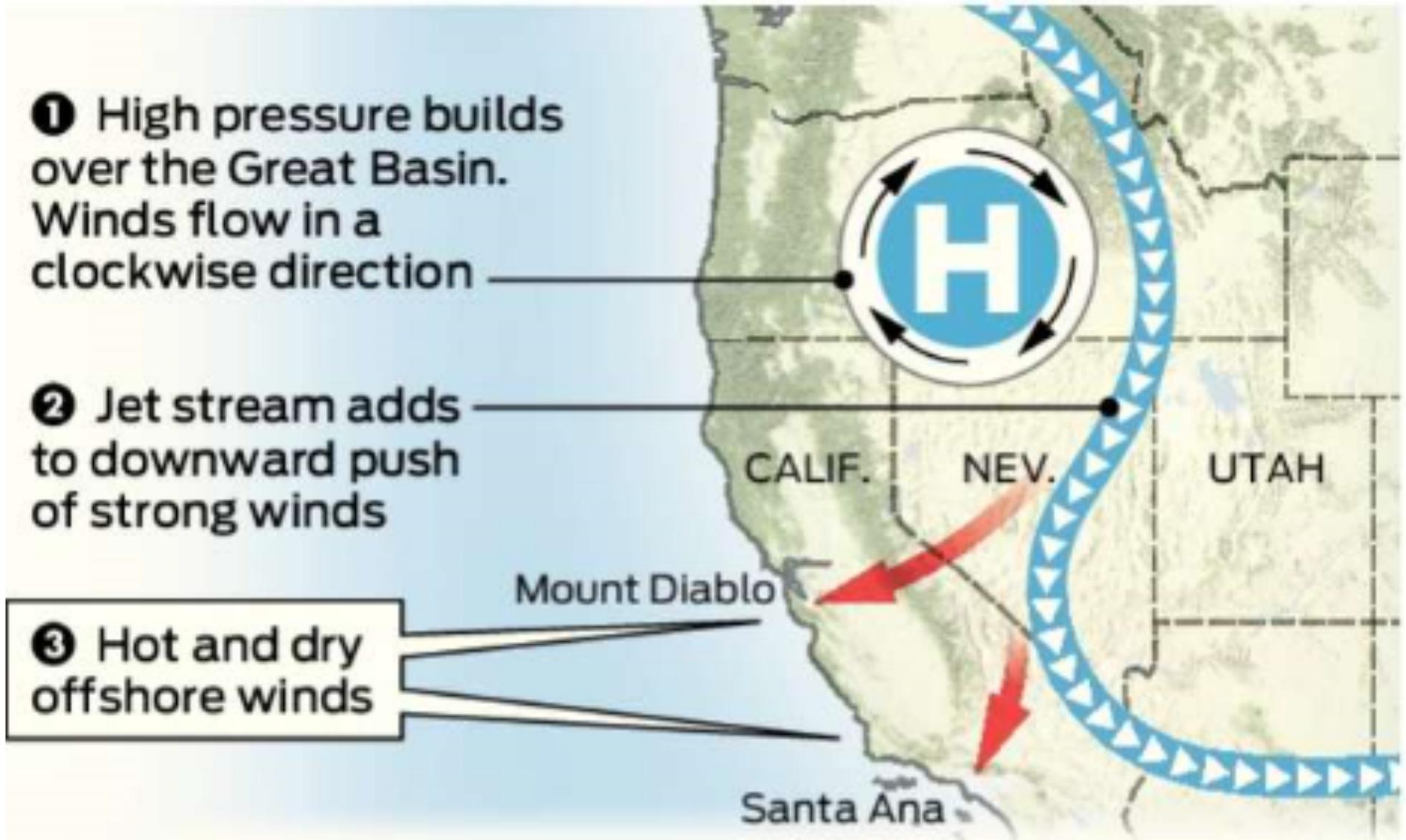
Three employees of the Half Moon Bay Gun Club were rescued after being hemmed in for nearly twenty-four hours. Constable Simmons and twelve men fought a way to them, the process taking six hours.

Fences on the outskirts of the town of El Granada were burned before flames there were turned back. A sizeable pine grove near there was declared burning fiercely, with El Granada Park already in ashes.

# The Good News (Mostly)

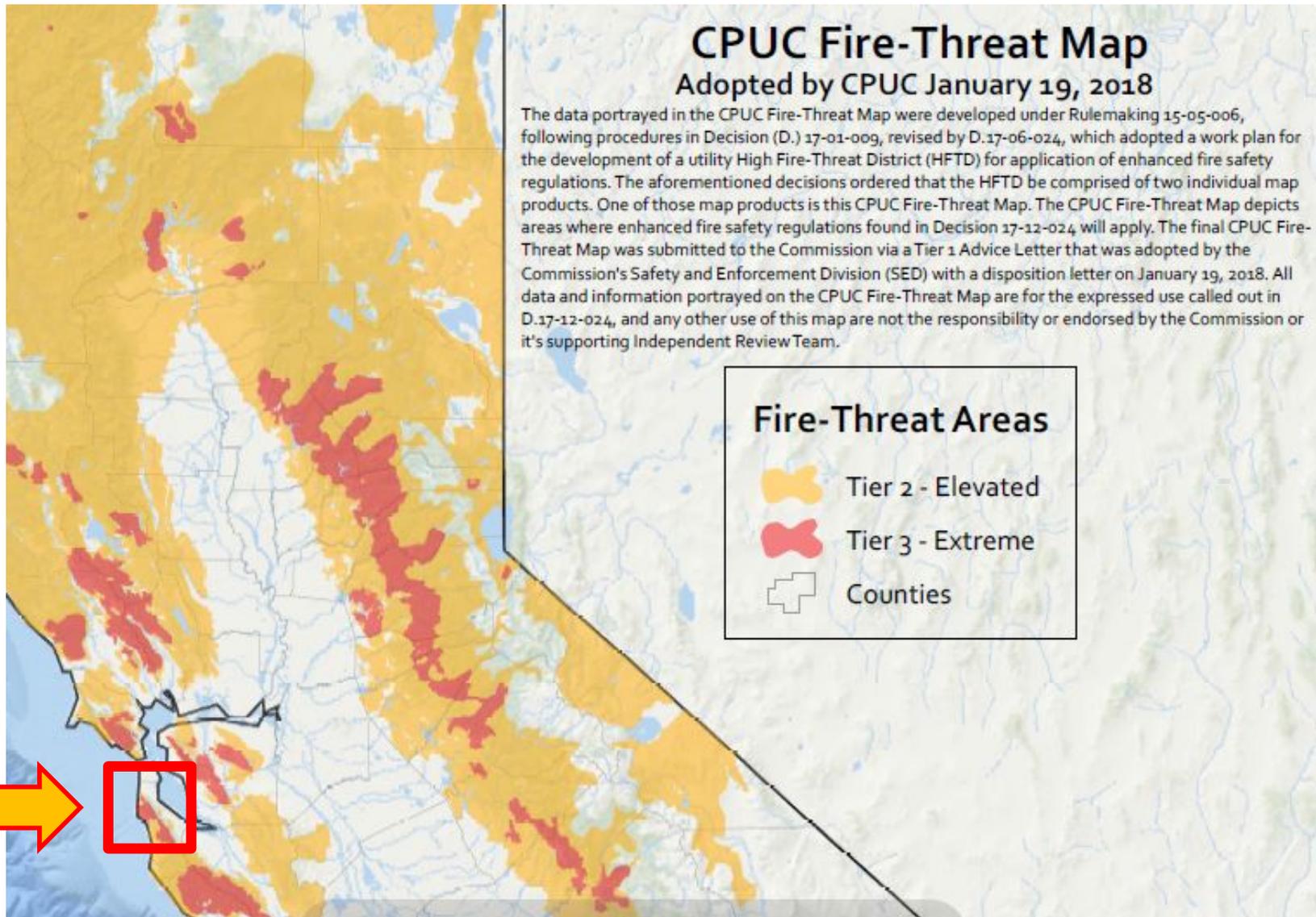
- We live in the high humidity coastal fog belt which, historically, has rarely sustained a major fire.
- In the historic past, only the ridgetops and inland areas have experienced major fires.
- Unfortunately, seasonal humidity is decreasing, temperatures are rising and the incidence of Diablo winds is increasing.
- And we are now in a Very High Fire Hazard Zone!

# Diablo Winds - Hot Dry Offshore Winds





# Fire Insurance Rate Hikes and Cancellations

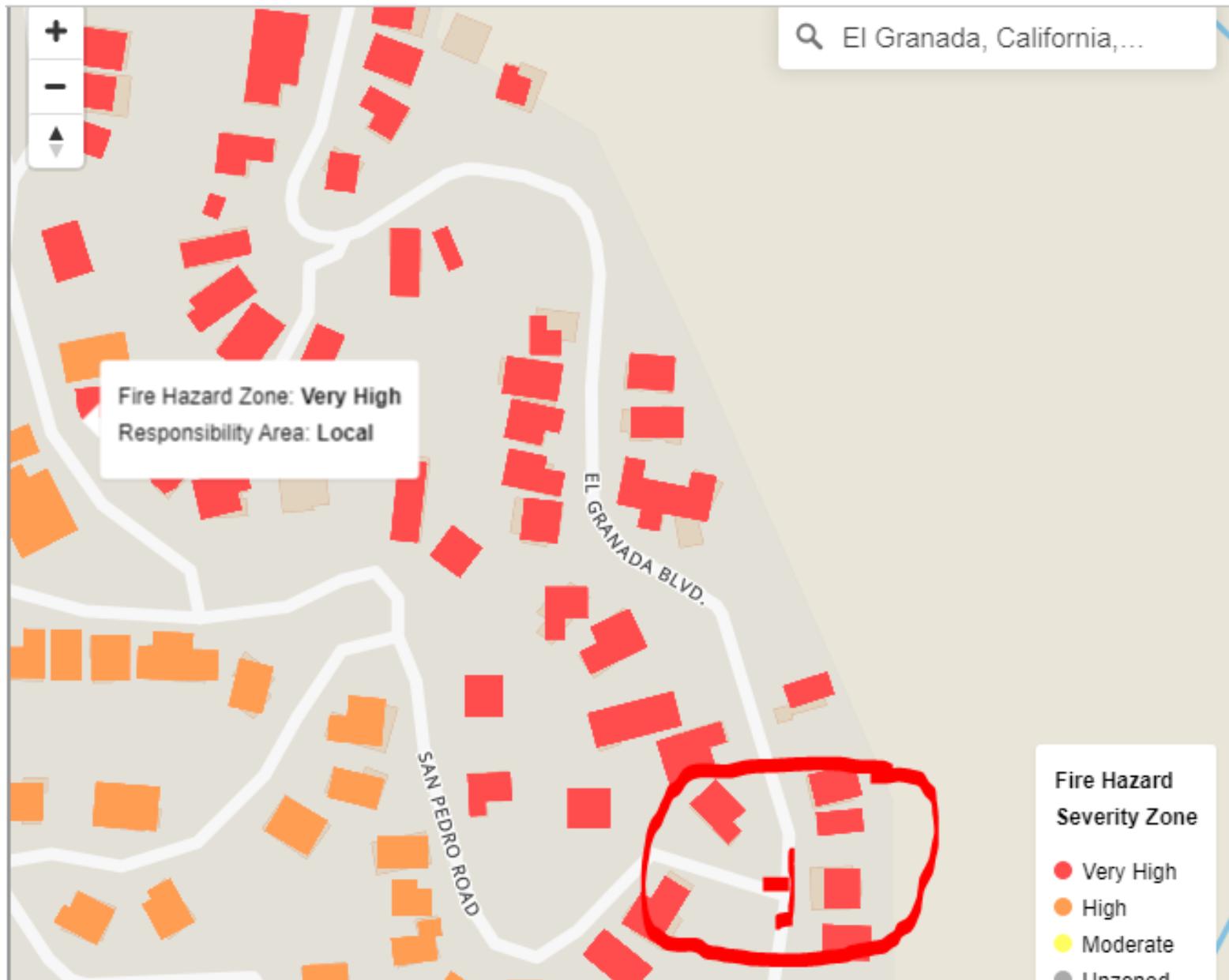


# El Granada Highlands – No Exit

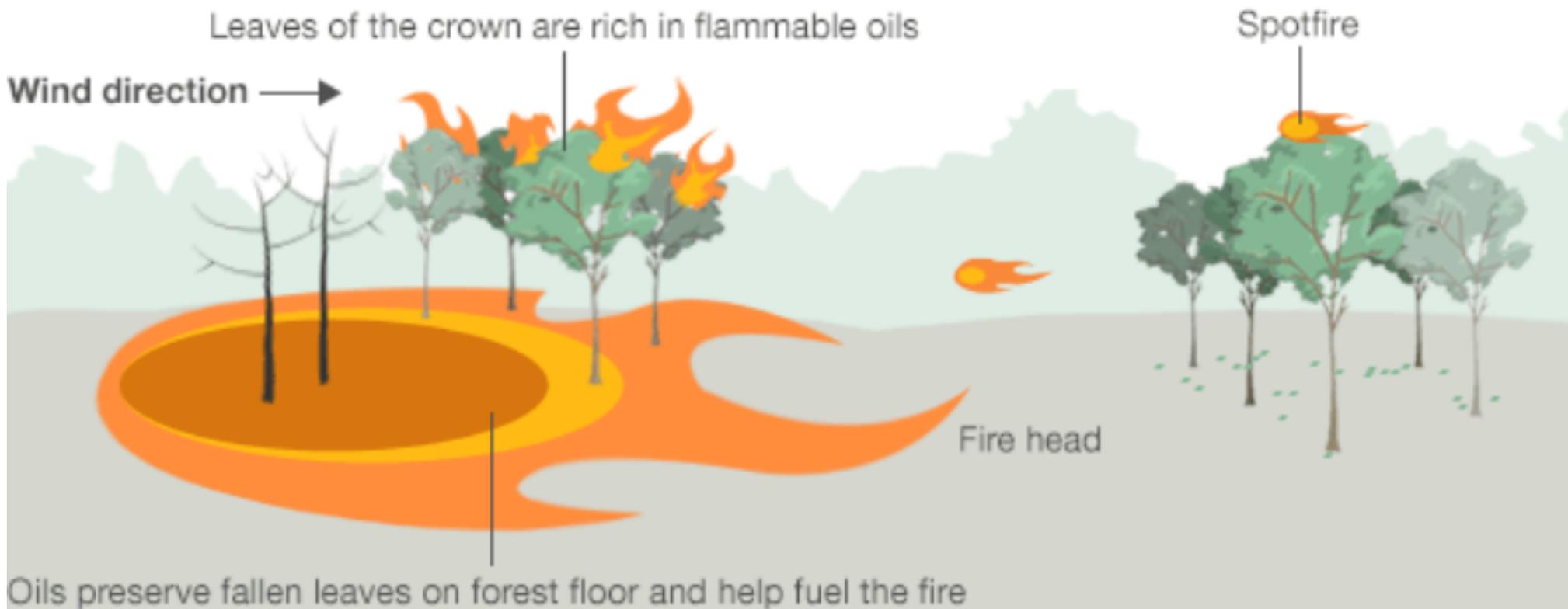
**Locked Gate**



# Fire at EG Blvd & San Pedro Rd



# Slope X Wind + Ignition = Quarry Park Crown/Canopy Fire?



# Quarry Park Terrain



700 ft Elevation 30%-70% Grades  
Virtually Impossible to Fight Canopy Fire!

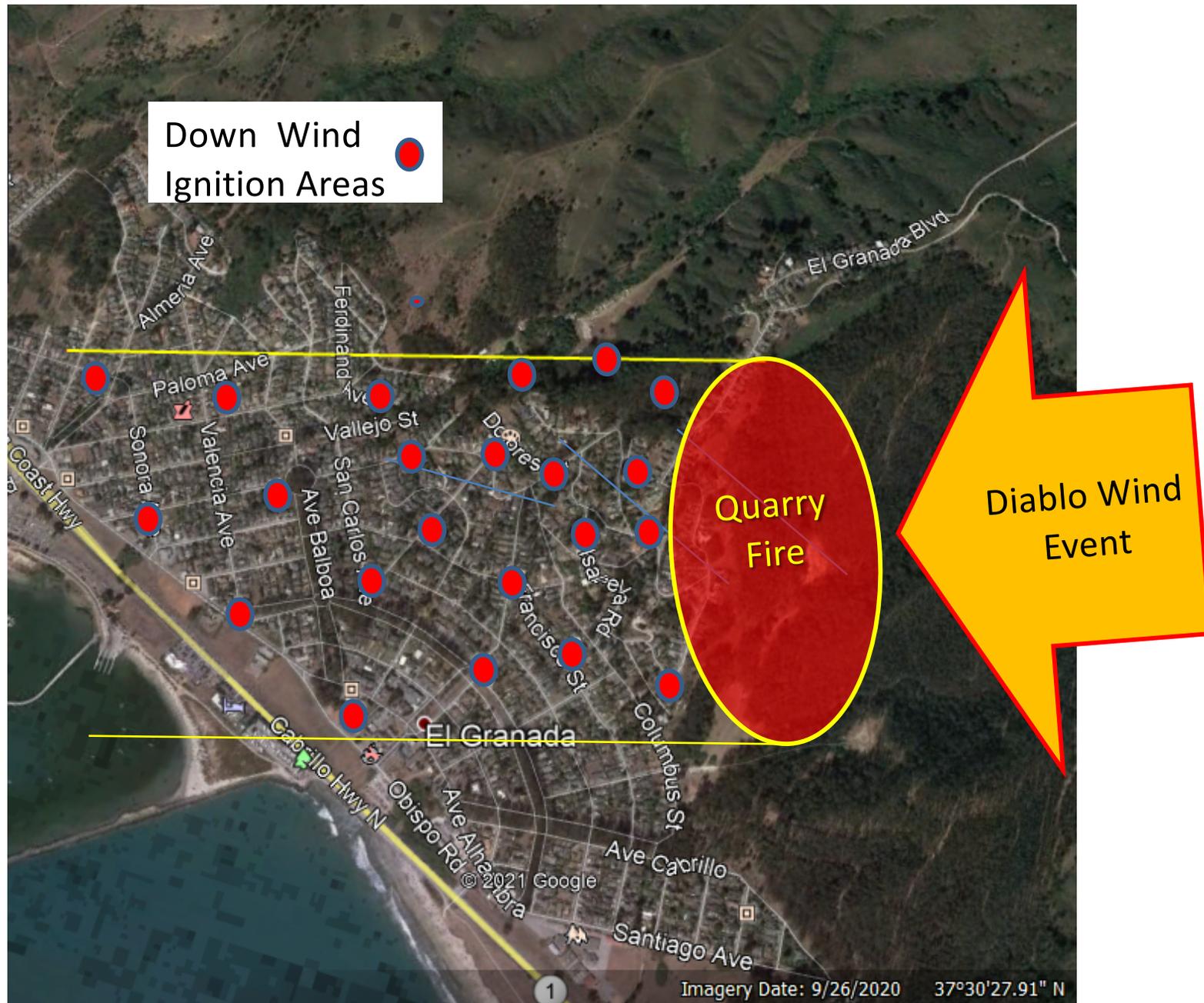
# How Would it Start?

- Urban Boundary Accidents
  - House Wiring, Power Poles, Transformers, etc.
  - Engine sparks (Including Generators, Off Road Vehicles)
  - Barbeque Grills
- Aerial Fireworks & Gasoline Fire (Quarry Park Rave – August 29, 2020)
- Cigarettes (Anytime)
- Off Road Motorcycles (September 13, 2020)
- Arson
- Powerlines (1.8 Miles above EG highlands)
- Spread from GGNRA, SFPUC Lands

# Fire Probability

- The probability of a major fire in El Granada is relatively low in that we have averaged 1 Diablo Wind event per year.
- However, September, October and November have multiple days with 40+ mph winds and temperatures in the upper 80's. With very low humidity, these factors cause high flammability conditions within a single day.
- Although the probability of a eucalyptus canopy fire in Quarry Park may be relatively low, the outcome will be a catastrophe!

# If a Canopy Fire started in Quarry Park



# So If Fire Suppression is Very Unlikely, What Can Be Done ?

- Remove Mature Eucalyptus Trees to establish defensible perimeters.
- Prioritize large tree removal over ground fuel clearance **even if fuel remains on the ground.**  
**Brush fires are suppressible, crown fires are not.**
- Establish fire webcams covering Quarry Park
- Establish volunteers as FireWatch during Diablo wind events.
- But Most Importantly - **Convince our elected officials to fund the effort.**

# Liability & Funding

- Life threatening locations, especially EG Blvd. with no exit.
- Potential Loss of more than \$2.2 Billion (2,212 Housing Units x \$1 million avg.) ?
- What liability does San Mateo County have in the event of a eucalyptus fire due to insufficient maintenance in face of fire threat ?
- What is the cost to clear cut ½+ square mile of eucalyptus? (\$ 43,000,000? @ \$130,000/acre)
- How do we fund clearcutting 1 / 2 square mile of eucalyptus? ( Calfire loggers?)

# Priorities

- 1 - Protect Lives - Remove mature eucs along EG Blvd where people have no escape from either a Quarry Park initiation point or a San Pedro intersection crossover.
- 2 - Protect Property - Same as above. Plus increase removal of all County Eucs bordering EG (Quarry Park and Medians).
- 3 - Worry about disposal, replanting, etc.

# Action !

- Declare an Emergency – If it isn't one now, by fall it will be!
- Obtain funding to ensure that quarry park and the coastside are eucalyptus removal priorities due to:
  - Vulnerable population including elderly
  - Areas with no evacuation options when exposed to fast moving wildfire.
  - Lack of hospitals and effective evacuation routes from coastside ( 92 & Highway 1 will probably be at a standstill )
  - Property Destruction with uninsured owners.
  - Extreme Slopes in Quarry Park block firefighting efforts
  - Multi Agency Funding Co-ordination – Feds, GGNRA & FEMA , State Parks, County Parks & County DPW, SFPUC are stakeholders.
  - MCC letters to local state and federal government that this is a “pay now or pay later” and that the consequences of inaction are deadly!

# The Consequences of Inaction are Death and Destruction

