

Barstop Fire Almost Contained

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Officials warn that blaze may not be extinguished until Thursday

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Crews of firefighters continued digging trenches around a 1,200-acre wildfire that was mostly contained late Sunday night but might not be extinguished until later this week. The fire has consumed 23 homes and 12 businesses, including the Wild Fire Cafe on Texas 71. No deaths have been reported.

Most of the residents who were ordered to evacuate Saturday were allowed to return to their homes late Sunday afternoon, when authorities said the fire was about 80 percent contained. But in some areas, fire still posed enough risk that residents were allowed to stay for only a few hours.

"We just ask the community as a whole to pray for the families and the firefighters involved," said Bastrop County Judge Ronnie McDonald, the county's top official. "The fire's devastating, but we'll work through it. We just need to take care of the families" who lost their homes.

The fire started Saturday when a tree at least 60 feet tall fell onto a power line, sparking a blaze that scorched a rural area between the cities of Bastrop and Smithville along Texas 71 east of Austin.

To read the full article, visit: <http://www.statesman.com/news/content/news/stories/local/03/02/0302fire.html>