

TRIANGLE BUSINESS JOURNAL

How California wildfires are being felt in the Triangle



Firefighters fight the Kincade Fire in Windsor, Calif., Oct. 27, 2019. (Eric Thayer/The New York Times)

By Lauren Ohnesorge – Senior Staff Writer, Triangle Business Journal - Oct 29, 2019

Wildfire-related blackouts in California are hitting home in the Triangle.

Cary's Epic Games has a team in impacted Marin County, California -- north of San Francisco -- an area where power was cut off over purported concern over the fires' spread. Instead of coding, it's been chess games by candlelight, employees have noted in social media posts.

The “Fortnight” developer isn’t commenting, but CEO Tim Sweeney is tweeting about the dilemma this week, pledging that the blackout “won’t stop us.



Tim Sweeney @TimSweeneyEpic

The California blackout has hit the Epic team in Marin County, but that won't stop us! We'll go back to writing code the way our ancestors did, with quill pens. (P.S. does anybody know how to catch a bird?)

And Epic is one of multiple Triangle touchpoints. Chuck Robbins, CEO of one of Research Triangle Park’s largest employers, Cisco, has also been tweeting about the situation this week, pledging to help employees “and all others who are impacted.”

Thinking of everyone affected by the terrible #KincaidFire in Northern California and other fires across the state. Please stay safe!! @Cisco will do all we can to help our employees and all others who are impacted.

— **Chuck Robbins (@ChuckRobbins) October 27, 2019**

The situation creates a major challenge for companies – but it’s also creating a big hurdle for the state of California when it comes to economic development. And it’s one that could benefit East Coast states, North Carolina included, a site selection consultant predicts.

“A buzz word in the economic development business is ‘continuity of operations,’” says John Boyd, a site selection expert with the Boyd Company of New Jersey. “Companies want to avoid disruptions in operations due to natural disasters and generally look at areas insulated from natural disasters and extreme weather – like the Triangle Region – as a business climate positive. Add the threat of wild fires to a list of negatives associated with California – high taxes, high business costs, prohibitively high home prices that make recruiting difficult in California.”

He says he expects wild fires “to be another driver of businesses and wealth leaving California.”

If only humanity had a giant hydrogen fusion reactor in space, we could beam its energy to individual homes in the form of electromagnetic radiation and convert it to electrical power.
<https://t.co/OuSDNr8moy>

— **Tim Sweeney (@TimSweeneyEpic) October 28, 2019**