

# ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

## Flare-up erupts Saturday after fire at massive Tustin hangar



A view of the flare-up at the Tustin hangar is seen on Saturday, Nov. 11, 2023, four days after the original fire. (Photo courtesy of Emily Moncur)



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A flare-up was visible on Saturday evening, Nov. 11, four days after fire ripped through the massive World War II-era hangar at the Tustin Marine Corps Air Station.

The sudden, fiery eruption was to be expected, the Orange County Fire Authority said. But it raises additional concerns about the release of asbestos and other toxic pollutants.



The flare-up seen Saturday at the Tustin hangar (Photo courtesy of Heather McDermott-Perez)

Dozens of firefighters responded to the initial fire on Tuesday, but the threat of asbestos lingering in the smoke and fears that the structure is not stable have prevented a significant attack on the fire in the days since, according to the OCFA.

### **[Fire destroys massive, historic north hangar at shuttered Tustin airfield](#)**

The city of Tustin and Orange County both declared states of emergency because of the asbestos, and the Tustin Unified School District shut down all schools on Thursday. They also will be closed on Monday, a non-student day for all TUSD campuses, the district announced on Saturday.

District officials have categorized each campus according to the distance from the hangar and the presence of fire debris. Those farthest away are labeled green, those closer are yellow and those

in the immediate proximity are red. A breakdown is posted at <https://www.tustin.k12.ca.us/tustin-hangar-fire>.

The district said a certified asbestos consulting firm, Envirocheck, will conduct testing at all its campuses.

Residents in Tustin, as well as surrounding cities, have been advised to close their windows and avoid ash from the fire.

Irvine resident Emily Moncur, a graphic designer and photographer, was at a Joann Fabric store near the hangar when she spotted the smoke on Saturday afternoon.

The chemicals being released into the air are making her nervous, she said.

Moncur has been staying mostly indoors to avoid the smoke.

“We haven’t seen any embers,” she said, “but you can almost taste the air when you go out.”

### **[Asbestos from Tustin hangar fire triggers health warnings, closures](#)**

The OCFA and the Tustin Police Department responded to what authorities described as a “small” flare-up at the north hangar at around 5 p.m. Saturday.

Crews are currently on scene monitoring the blaze, but according to OCFA Capt. Greg Barta, flare-ups are normal with fires this large, and intervening is unnecessary.

It’s unclear if the flare-up will release more asbestos, but Barta said that because firefighters cannot get into the hangar and put the blaze out, not much can be done at this point.



Another view of the flare-up visible on Saturday at the Tustin hangar (Photo courtesy of Emily Moncur)

“Everyone should be aware of the recommended precautions to reduce the health effects of smoke and ash from building fires,” Dr. Regina Chinsio-Kwong, Orange County Health Officer and OC Health Care Agency’s Director of Public Health Services, said in a statement.

“Extra measures may be needed for those with pre-existing medical conditions like heart or lung disease, those with disabilities, older adults, children and those who may be working outdoors.”

Health officials listed several measures the public can take to stay safe:

- Avoid touching fire debris/ash or other materials unless properly trained to do so;
- Wear protective equipment (mask/gloves) if in an area where there is high risk of encountering asbestos;
- Remove shoes before entering a residence;
- Keep windows closed on windy days;
- Spray patios with water instead of sweeping them;
- Avoid using leaf blowers;
- Wash off ash from vehicles, outdoor toys, outdoor furniture and pets.

*City News Service contributed to this report.*