

SMOKE EXPOSURE Spotlight

SEPTEMBER 2025



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RMA Begins Posting FIP-SI Smoke-Day Counts for Crop Insurance

USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) has begun posting the number of "heavy smoke" days as identified by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and used for the Fire Insurance Protection-Smoke Index (FIP-SI) crop insurance endorsement. In California, Fresno, San Luis Obispo and Madera counties have exceeded the 13-day threshold on the preliminary table.

What is FIP-SI?

Offered for the first time this year in California, FIP-SI is an area-wide endorsement you can stack on your Grape Crop Provisions policy for protection when regional smoke is severe. It doesn't use vineyard lab results; instead, it measures county smoke exposure via NOAA's Hazard Mapping System. If your county accumulates 13 or more "heavy smoke" days during the insurance period (June 1–Nov. 10), the policy triggers and pays according to schedule.

Because FIP-SI is index-based, it doesn't measure block-level loss. It hedges county-wide risk and complements individual coverage for documented quality loss. Think of it as systemic-risk coverage for hazards that affect entire regions.

RMA announced this summer that FIP-SI is expanding its coverage and will be made available for grapes in Idaho, Oregon and Washington starting with the 2026 crop year. The sales closing date for those states is Nov. 20, 2025.

FIP-SI in 60 Seconds

- Must be added by the crop insurance deadline for winegrapes, which varies depending on the state.
- Looks at county smoke exposure, not individual lab tests.
- If your county logs 13+ "heavy smoke" days between June 1 and Nov. 10, FIP-SI pays a scheduled amount.
- Complements MPCI Quality Adjustment (QA), which covers documented quality loss.
- No notice of loss is required. After Nov. 10, RMA posts triggered counties and payments.

FIP-SI Videos / USDA

Part 1 <https://youtu.be/VrulUc7jYG4>

Part 2 <https://youtu.be/o1MH8ec3SUE>

►Need help? For more information on the FIP-SI policy, visit [RMA's FIP-SI page](#), which includes informational videos, FAQs, policy provisions and historical smoke maps.

►Questions about how FIP-SI fits your operation or how to read the table? Contact your crop insurance agent or state winegrape growers' association.

►Note: This is general guidance. Please consult your licensed crop insurance agent for advice specific to your policy.

WEST COAST
SMOKE EXPOSURE
TASK FORCE

WCSETF.ORG

2025 WILDFIRE SEASON

CALIFORNIA

The 2025 wildfire season in California has posed significant challenges for winegrape growers, particularly due to the Gifford Fire and Pickett Fire. These fires have not only threatened physical assets but have also exacerbated the ongoing economic pressures within the wine industry.

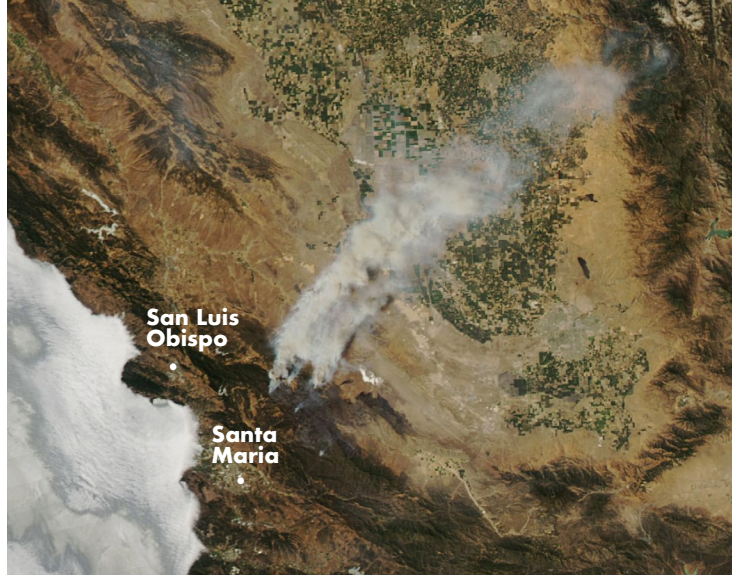
Central Coast

The Gifford Fire, which ignited in early August, became the state's largest wildfire of the year, burning over 130,000 acres across Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties. Evacuation orders and warnings led to temporary closures of wineries and disrupted vineyard operations. Additionally, the proximity of the fire raised concerns about potential smoke exposure to winegrapes.

Napa County

The Pickett Fire began on Aug. 21 in Napa County, burned over 6,800 acres, threatening approximately 1,500 acres of agricultural land including vineyards. Preliminary assessments estimate at least \$65 million in agricultural losses, with winegrapes bearing the brunt of the damage. Notably, 80% of the reported damages to winegrapes were due to smoke exposure, while 20% resulted from direct fire or heat damage.

The persistence of wildfires across the West Coast underscores the urgent need for continued research – into smoke exposure, mitigation strategies and tools that protect growers, wineries and communities.



Gifford Fire. Aug. 8, 2025.
Photo courtesy NASA Visible Earth.

Research Status Reports

USDA-ARS is in the process of asking researchers to share status reports of their smoke exposure research. As of Sept. 15, two reports have been posted on the WCSETF website, with additional reports to be posted in the weeks and months ahead. Click research tab, then [Smoke Exposure Research Roadmap](#) subtab.

Smoke Exposure Sessions at 2026 Events

Unified Wine & Grape Symposium

Jan. 27-29, 2026
Sacramento, Calif.

Smoke Exposure Research Roadmap

Wine industry reps, researchers and USDA-ARS partnered to create a roadmap to ensure future research is collaborative, directional and practical. Learn more about the latest research in the fields of measurement, prevention and remediation. Attendees will also get a view of what is being planned for future research in this field.

Oregon Wine Symposium

Feb. 3-4, 2026
Portland, Ore.

Towards a Better Understanding of Smoke Exposure Impact

The session will present the latest research on the impact of smoke exposure. Speakers will share findings from a multi-year study examining naturally occurring smoke compounds in various grape varieties, sensory thresholds of these compounds in red wines, and how improved knowledge of smoke emissions and atmospheric aging can support risk assessment and management for growers and winemakers.

WAVE / Ravenholt Seminar

April 22, 2026
Richland, Wash.

Smoke Research: Putting Findings into Practice

Washington Advancements in Viticulture and Enology (WAVE) will team with Washington State University's Ravenholt Lecture Series for a seminar on the latest findings from smoke exposure research and what learnings can be incorporated into wine industry practices. Presentations on major research objectives will be shared by university and USDA-ARS scientists. The seminar includes sensory tasting and discussion of smoke exposed wines, research poster display, lunch and wine social.

WCSETF WEBSITE RESOURCES



- Research
- Best practices
- FAQs on smoke impacts
- Smoke analysis labs
- Contracts
- Crop insurance
- Wildfire preparedness
- Fire apps
- University resources
- Informational videos
- Newsletter and bulletins
- News and events

EVENTS



Upcoming events and past recordings:
wcsetf.org/events

The WCSETF originated from discussions in early 2019 between winegrape growers, winemakers, wine/winegrape industry leaders as well as related industry entities from California, Oregon and Washington. The task force held its first in-person meeting in July 2019. Since that time, the task force has convened educational webinars and produced reference materials to assist growers and winemakers with certain challenges associated with smoke-exposed winegrapes.