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FIRE: Overheated electrical cord deemed cause of blaze

Continued from page 1

reportedly caused by an electrical cord plugged into a travel trailer overheating.

The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office in consultation with Cloverdale Fire Protection District initiated Level 3 (Go Now!) evacuation notices in the areas south of Cascade Estates Drive, north of Highway 20 and west of Fryrear Road. Evacuees were allowed back into their homes on Sunday.

Multiple fire agencies responded to the incident from around Central Oregon, sending two structural protection task forces. Central Oregon Fire Management Services (U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management) and Oregon Department of Forestry also assisted. Air tankers and

helicopters attacked the fire from the air.

The air attack turned the tide on a blaze that posed serious danger not only to homes but to those protecting them.

"It was absolutely critical," Cloverdale Fire District Fire Chief Thad Olsen told *The Nugget*.

The retardant drops bought time for firefighters to save homes and outbuildings.

Facing 50-foot flames and armed only with hoses, "you just can't get in front of it, because you're going to lose firefighters."

Air tankers are not always available for the quick response seen on this fire.

"We got extremely lucky," Olsen said.

Forward progress on the fire was stopped around 6:30 p.m. Saturday evening. Highway 20 was closed until late Saturday night.

Garibay praised the efforts of the wide range of agencies that pitched in to prevent a bad incident from turning into

a catastrophic one.

"They made some great saves," he said. "Just a really great multiagency coordinated response. It could have been a lot worse."

Sgt. Garibay urges all Sisters Country residents to sign up for Deschutes Alerts, which was used to notify residents of the danger from the fire (<https://www.deschutes.org/911/page/sign-deschutes-emergency-alerts>).

He also said that the incident drives home the importance of creating defensible space around homes and outbuildings and making sure that address markers are visible and that properties

are accessible to emergency vehicles.

"That makes a tremendous difference, whether a house can survive in a wildland fire scenario," Garibay said.

Olsen reported that many homes in the area lack that kind of defensibility.

Many horses and other animals had to be evacuated from the area during the fire.

"They all got out in a relatively reasonable time frame," Garibay reported.

Having a plan in place — including where to take animals — is critical to making a swift evacuation under pressure go smoothly, Garibay noted.

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