

Local

Sumpter rallies to help local family after motor home fire

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Local citizens from the Sumpter area rallied last week to supply the needs of those displaced by a fire up Cracker Creek Road.

The fire started within a motor home, home to three campers and their dogs.

Crews from the Sumpter Volunteer Fire Department and Powder River Rural Fire Department were unable to save the vehicle, which was the permanent residence of the campers, but worked quickly to keep the fire from spreading. All the campers' belongings were lost.

Kurt Clarke, Fire Chief for Sumpter, said this was a mutual aid call with crews from the Sumpter and Powder River Departments working cooperatively at the scene.

John Young of Sumpter said, "It was mostly smoke when we got there, and we got it knocked down and made sure it didn't spread."

Clarke said the Fire Departments continued to work together to provide shelter and supplies for the campers, a group of three women with the oldest member in her 70s.

Young said Myrna Clarke and Dave Stelman of Sumpter and Kathy Vincent of Powder River deserve the credit for figuring out what the campers needed and mobilizing supplies.



Meghan Andersch / The Baker County Press

Local citizens in Sumpter donated time and equipment to assist those displaced by a motor home fire up Cracker Creek Road

Clarke and Stelman also traveled to Baker City to get the campers to Red Cross and help get medications straightened out.

Fire Chief Clarke said the tone sounded about 6:30 and by 9:00, tents were set up and food and supplies, including dog food for the 7-9 dogs living with the campers, had been provided.

Lynne Applegate, Sumpter Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary member, reported a whole caravan of vehicles went out to the campsite, bringing blankets, food, clothing, sleeping bags, dog food,

and cash to meet immediate needs. A stove was also donated.

Clarke said members of the Fire Department are still working with Red Cross and the campers to find them shelter. Volunteers have provided rides to doctor appointments and helped connect the women with local food banks.

Sumpter and Powder River Fire Departments also had members coming off the Cornet Fire.

Applegate said her husband Gary had spent all one night at Stices Gulch helping out. And, in a further show of cooperation

and community spirit, Neal Bork, resident of Sumpter, has donated use of a cat to both Fire Departments for the remainder of the fire season.

Young said the mutual agreement between the Fire Departments worked great and shows how much Sumpter's Fire Department has improved the last few years.

Applegate said, "I do not live in the town but to see so many folks rush to help total strangers in need blessed my socks off. Our fire departments should be applauded."

City of Unity under boil notice

• E.COLI CONTAMINATES WATER SUPPLY

Residents within the City of Unity will remain on a boil water notice until water samples return negative for E.coli. It is unknown at this time where the contamination may have taken place.

Under the guidance of the State's Drinking Water Program, Mayor Bennett and local health officials treated the City's water tank Thursday evening with the hopes of flushing and testing the water by the following Monday. Current fire conditions surrounding the area have delayed that process.

Officials hoped to be able to flush the water system by last Tuesday afternoon and pull samples to be tested by the certified lab in Pendleton by Wednesday. Test results are expected soon.

E. coli is a type of fecal coliform bacteria commonly found in the intestines of animals and humans. E. coli is short for Escherichia coli. The presence of E. coli in water is a strong indication of recent sewage or animal waste contamination. Sewage may contain many types of disease-causing organisms.

Fecal coliforms are bacteria that are associated with human or animal wastes. They usually live in human or animal intestinal tracts, and their presence in drinking water is a strong indication of recent sewage or animal waste contamination.

E. coli comes from human and animal wastes. During rainfalls, snow melts, or other types of precipitation, E. coli may be washed into creeks, rivers, streams, lakes, or ground water. When these waters are used as sources of drinking water and the water is not treated or inadequately treated, E. coli may end up in drinking water.

E. coli O157:H7 is one of hundreds of strains of the bacterium E. coli. Although most strains are harmless and live in the intestines of healthy humans and animals, this strain produces a powerful toxin and can cause severe illness.

Infection often causes severe bloody diarrhea and abdominal cramps; sometimes the infection causes non-bloody diarrhea. Symptoms usually appear within two to four days, but can take up to eight days.

Wildfires burn Baker County

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While Baker County continues to experience three major active fires, it is the Canyon Fire near John Day that has taken center stage. Of the 105 wildfires burning in the U.S., the Canyon Fire has reached the status as priority number one in the nation for firefighting resources. 36 homes have been lost to the fire.

Fire fighting resources from Oregon Department of Forestry, United States Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management, and utility crews have been spread thin by the widespread fire situation throughout eastern Oregon. Locally, the needs for additional resources has been filled in Baker County by nothing short of a heroic effort from county and municipal personnel, and from private citizens.

The three main fires in Baker County are listed as the Eagle Complex, the Eldorado, and the Cornet/Windy Ridge. The August 18 fire report was released just as a new fire sparked near Huntington, Oregon. Jason Yencopal, Baker County Emergency Services Manager reports on August 19, that an aggressive firefighting effort contained it to within 108 acres with one threatened structure saved.

Cornet/Windy Ridge.

The Cornet/Windy Ridge Fire, located near Hereford, Bridgeport and just outside Baker City, began as the result of lightning on August 10. The

Cornet Fire was first reported as a 245-acre blaze beginning in the southwest Dooley Mountain area. By the next day, the Cornet Fire exploded into a 5,000-acre fire and pushed by high winds, hot temperatures, and an overload of tinder dry natural fuels, burned together with the Windy Ridge Fire sometime around August 14. By August 18, the combined blazes had torched nearly 100,000-acres of brush, grass, and timbered land. As of August 18, there were 18 crews totaling 677 fire fighters on site; 3 engines; 12 dozers; and, one helicopters working to contain 35-percent of the fire. Structures lost to the Cornet/Windy Ridge Fire numbered eight by August 18.

"The weather has shifted in our favor," said Ted Kunz, Cornet/Windy Ridge Fire Incident Commander Oregon State Fire Marshal's office during an interview August, 16. "We had a good day today and hope for a good night tonight. We've had a lot of saves on houses but there are still hot-spots. It's a wide area and remote."

When asked about livestock and wildlife, Kunz reported, "There have been a few head of livestock lost that we know of. Fewer than 10. Early warnings were issued to help get the livestock out. There was a herd of about 30 elk lost on the Windy Ridge Fire." Since then, the reported cattle loss has grown significantly.

Kunz added that many

of the local residents had pre-made fire plans that minimized the loss of livestock and listened to evacuation orders as they were issued. The state fire marshal's office coordinated command with the USFS Southwest Incident Management Team lead by Incident Commander Mark Ruggiero. Both incident commanders led a public information meeting at the Nazarene Church attended by hundreds of concerned local residents.

On August 19, Steve Berube from the Incident Management Team showed a fire control line around the majority of the Cornet/Windy Ridge Fire. There were still several areas within the Cornet/Windy Ridge Fire that defy containment, including areas on the northern and eastern edges of the fire and an area just west of Durkee.

Eldorado.

The Eldorado Fire began on August 14 due to an undetermined cause. By August 18, it had burned 20,500-acres five miles southeast of Unity. Seven crews with a total 285 personnel were working the fire with 14 engines; seven dozers; five water tenders; and, four helicopters. Crews had the Eldorado Fire 30-percent contained by the morning of August 18.

On August 19, the map of the Eldorado Fire showed no fire control line within the fire perimeter.

Eagle Complex.

The Eagle Complex Fire continues to burn in steep, rugged terrain near the

main Eagle Creek and East Eagle Creek roads. Crews have been dispatched to the area and a highly skilled hand-crew has been requested, said Gary Timm, Baker County Fire Manager. Timm voiced concern for the potential explosive growth of this fire given the rugged terrain, and the natural fuel loads that exist throughout the Eagle Creek area.

"The number one priority is firefighter an public safety, followed by protection of the cabins in the area. We're up against it with the topography, the fuel loading, and the one-way in/one-way out access," said Timm of the Eagle Complex blaze.

Electrical utility providers were also scrambling to cover widespread needs throughout the region. Idaho Power Co., Inc., had nine five-person crews dispatched on the Soda Fire in southwest Oregon as that fire continued to race across agricultural lands of southwestern Oregon leaving limited resources to draw upon for the utility fixes needed on the fire burning in Baker County.

"There are 120 transmission poles down on the Soda Fire," said Byron Dale, patrolman for Idaho Power, August 16. "The crews are exhausted and have been out the last three nights. The crews have been strung out by the Soda Fire."

"We're running out of materials: power poles and cross-arms," Dale said.

While crews replaced transmission poles burned



Brian Addison / The Baker County Press

Ted Kunze (right), Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office Incident Commander and Mark Ruggiero, Incident Commander from the Southwest Incident Management Team work together in joint command.

down by the Soda Fire, The Eldorado Fire five miles southeast of Unity, Oregon burned down 19 two-pole structures. Replacement materials were expected to arrive on August 17 or August 18, according to Brent Lulloff, Idaho Power Regional Manager. Once the materials have arrived, Lulloff said there'd be six five person crews dispatched to make the pole repairs in the Eldorado Fire area.

"Unity is served by Idaho Power and the local service is still active," said Lulloff on August 16.

While Idaho Power dispatched enough crews to deal with the downed poles, local electric company Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC) worked to keep working the 138-kV electrical power line between the substation in Hines, Oregon and John Day, according to Lara Peticlerc-Stokes, OTEC Manager of Communications and Government Affairs. The line was threatened by the massive Canyon Fire burning just south of John Day.

Late reports from OTEC on August 18 indicate that the line remains operable. That fire is still active and OTEC has obtained a 2.5 mega watt generator from Seattle to keep electricity at the hospital and emergency services building in case the town loses power.

The Cornet/Windy Ridge fire took down electricity in the Bridgeport area, and at about 4 p.m., August 14, to the Beaver Mountain local access television translator atop Beaver Mountain knocking out local access television stations. OTEC reported on August 19, that crews have begun repair work to restore television service, including Boise channels.

The American Red Cross remained on standby status at the Nazarene Church with volunteers and two nurses ready to assist those in need.

The Baker County Code Red alert system helped to inform citizens of evacuation status, according to Yencopal. Those with cell phones may sign up for the Red Code by visiting www.911.org.