

Wind-driven fire stirred Biscuit fear

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vent it from destroying nearby homes and Shady Acres RV Park.

As the fire advanced, some residents along the west end of Schumacher and River streets were evacuated, as well as from Shady Acres RV Park. Some left voluntarily, including some residents from Pine Ridge Estates off South Kerby Avenue, a couple of blocks west of and below Shop Smart Food Warehouse.

In addition, residents at Valley Village were concerned about possible evacuation, but flames coming toward them from the west were halted.

When the first alarm sounded, IVFD volunteers from throughout Illinois Valley, including some from Grants Pass, dropped what they were doing, closed businesses or left work, and raced to the scene.

Additional support was immediately requested from several agencies, some of which were monitoring I.V.'s frequency and could tell that the situation would require additional resources. Rapidly responding, either to assist with containment of the blaze or to provide other support service, were Oregon Dept. of Forestry (ODF), Rural/Metro Fire Dept., Grants Pass Fire/Rescue, Jackson County, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Grayback Forestry, Rough & Ready Lumber Co., U.S. Forest Service, Josephine County Sheriff's Office (JCSO), Oregon State Police (OSP), and American Medical Response (AMR).

Within minutes, one helicopter with a bucket arrived and began dousing flames along the east ridge as the fire escaped north toward Cave Junction along a brush-covered hillside. In all, five helicopters of varying sizes aided the battle.

An ODF bomber from Medford, one of two that responded, successfully performed three drops while flying close over the fire's front line, dropping retardant on advancing flames. Because of dense smoke and debris blowing into people's yards, and

onto their homes and motor vehicles, residents were worried.

"I knew we were in trouble right away when we came outside (from a meeting at the north end of Cave Junction) and saw all the smoke," said IVFD Chief Harry Rich.

"I thought we'd lose all the homes near the fire," he said. "It was difficult to reach the fire in some areas (because of heavy brush growth and trees)," he said.

Some civilians were upset at being stopped from entering the fire area.

"As a result of having a unified command (involving multiple agencies responding) there was less loss of property. The success (of firefighting efforts) is that we had no fire-related deaths," said Rich.

However, Catherine Torrence, a 92-year-old woman staying at the caretaker's house died after being transported to Three Rivers Community Hospital in Grants Pass. An investigation into her death is continuing.

Four volunteer firefighters needed medical attention due to heat exhaustion and smoke inhalation, said Rich, but all were eager to get back to the fire lines. One Grayback employee was hospitalized due to heat exhaustion.

Katherine Mechling, an IVFD volunteer and physician who operates Clear Creek Family Practice in Selma, said there was some danger involved. "I was afraid for my brother (I.V. Firefighter Andy Mechling)," she said. "When the fire became too close and we were pulling out of the 'Forks,' a burning tree fell across the road in front of his rig. Fortunately, he was able to quickly get out and clear the tree from the road with a chainsaw."

Larry Welsh, BLM task force leader, said, "The wind caused the fire to move very quickly. (But) if the wind hadn't carried it the way it did, there would have been

many more homes threatened."

An additional "spot-fire," likely caused by hot ash carried by wind from the main fire, burned 2.5 acres near Illinois Valley Golf Course before being contained.

Road blocks were set up by OSP and JCSO to prevent motorists from entering burning areas and hindering fire crews from responding. Southbound traffic was backed up at times for some 3 miles from Downtown Cave Junction; and northbound traffic was slow, sometimes stop-and-go.

This upset some residents who wanted to get back to their homes or families near the fire.

"We were very angry," said Cave Junction resident Lydia Welcome, a former Evergreen Elementary School teacher. "We just wanted to get to our families and see if they were OK," she said.

According to Welcome, there was some confusion as to the nature of the road block because signs had been placed on Sauer's Flat indicating that there was a wreck ahead.

American Red Cross set up an evacuation shelter at approximately 5:15 p.m. at Selma Community & Education Center. More than 25 volunteers, including six from Illinois Valley, set up cots and were ready to provide food to displaced families.

Shelter volunteers were sent home around 7:30 p.m. when it was announced by ODF that the fire was under control.

A report from JCSO said that the JoCo Emergency Operations Center was instructed to stand down at 6:15 p.m. because the fires had been halted, and that crews were moving into the mop-up (cleanup and final assessment) stage.

Although some roads remained closed to traffic, residents were allowed to return home shortly after the announcement.

IVFD crews remained to assist until being released at approximately 7 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 5. Overall, "fire response was a complete success," said Rich.



PROTECTING THEIR HOMES- Residents at Pine Ridge Estates used garden hoses to wet areas and roofs in the face of approaching flames Wednesday, Aug. 4



Campus News

U of O Names Two From Illinois Valley

Nicholas E. Leach and Andrew J. Seidler, of Cave Junction, attained the Dean's List at University of Oregon in Eugene for achieving grade-point averages of at least 3.75 during spring term 2003-2004.

Leach is a junior anthropology major.

Seidler is a freshman majoring in anthropology.

The Strip

At the I.V. Airport - 592-4488
(6 miles south on Hwy. 199)

'Bringing back TACO NIGHT!'

Mondays - 5 to 8 p.m.
\$1.50 per taco
*Engels Woodworking ate 30 tacos (among 3 people)!
Can you beat that record?*

**Hours: Monday & Wednesday through Saturday
10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. (closed Tuesdays)
Sunday: Noon to 6 p.m.**

**Thank you,
firefighters and law enforcement
personnel for all your
help during the 'Rough & Ready'
wildfire, Aug. 4.**

Are you ready?

We want to hear from you.

*Are you interested in learning more about what you and your neighbors can do to increase your chances of surviving a wildfire?
*Would you like to take protective steps to reduce your risks from wildfires?
*Do you have ideas about what can be done to make the Illinois Valley more fire safe?

Come find out how you can help determine our community's priorities for reducing our risks from wildfire, and the creation of the **Illinois Valley Fire Plan**.
All meetings are from 6:30 - 9 p.m.
Childcare & refreshments provided.

Cave Junction
Wednesday, August 18 - County Bldg.
102 S. Redwood Hwy. at Lister.

Questions?
Please contact I.V. Fire District
Fire Prevention Coordinator
De Spellman at 592-2225.

REGISTER NOW!

Cave Junction Early Head Start!

EHS is for low income pregnant women, infants and toddlers living in the Illinois Valley. All services are **FREE** for those who qualify. We welcome children with certified disabilities regardless of income!

Cave Junction Early Head Start Offers:

Parent/Child Groups
*For Pregnant Women and Children Birth to 3 Years of Age
Which include:
One Parent/Child Play Group per Week with parent support!*

This Center also offers:
Toddler Groups
*For children 18 Months to 3 Years of Age
With Two Play Groups per Week!*

Please Register NOW for September Classes!

Spaces are limited!

EARLY HEAD START

For more information, to turn in an application, or, to pick up an application please call:
Suzan McNally at 592-3259
You may also e-mail questions and requests to:
smcnally@socfc.org or
dbartlett@socfc.org
You may download an application from our Web Site at
www.socfc.org
Click on Early Head Start, scroll down to EHS application then click to download

ALL CHOICES INCLUDE:
USDA Meals and Snacks
Health and Nutrition Education
Child Development Education

Goal Setting
to
Reach Family Dreams

SOUTHERN OREGON HEAD START