

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 15, 2008

10:00 AM

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788-3147

Brush Fire under Investigation

(Hailey, Idaho) At 4:16pm July 14, 2008, thirteen engines from all municipal local agencies responded to an area in west Hailey, between China Gardens and the Big Wood. Upon arrival firefighters found a small, but rapidly growing wildfire burning with 30 foot flame lengths threatening 12 homes with fire impinging on 6 of those homes. At this time there is no damage to any residences, however 3 abandoned outbuildings were burned. Hailey Police Chief Jeff Gunter reported that the cause is of suspicious origin, and the fire is under investigation by The Hailey Police Department.

During the firefighting efforts, 8 to 10 tall Cottonwood trees fell and 12 were cut down to protect the firefighters from injury. Cottonwood trees are extremely hazardous. The older Cottonwood trees usually have hollow trunks and burn from the inside out. The fire was under control by 8 pm and most firefighters were released from the scene by 11 pm. Due to smoldering fires, firefighters from Wood River Fire & Rescue, and Hailey patrolled the scene throughout the night to ensure the safety of the area.

Local homeowners were instrumental in assisting firefighters in the protection of their homes, as the fire was initially advancing faster than apparatus could respond. Hailey Police and Public Works departments also provided significant assistance in restricting access from bystanders and in the removal of numerous vehicles from the roadway to allow better access for fire apparatus.

The agencies that responded included Bellevue, Hailey, Ketchum, SunValley and Wood River Fire & Rescue Departments. Friedman Memorial sent a Aircraft Crash/Rescue truck and the BLM responded with an Engine from Carey. A total of 13 structural engines and 5 support staff vehicles aided in the extinguishing of the fire. 7 structural engines were assigned to structural protection on Aspen Dr. The remaining units fought the fire from the old sewer road adjacent to the river access to Lower Board Ranch and suppressed the fire from the West Side.

Red Flag warnings have been issued by the National Weather Service from noon today until 9 pm. They are forecasting "isolated afternoon and evening showers and thunderstorms are expected over the mountains. Localized down pours and gusty downburst winds are the main threat.... Although no sever thunderstorms are anticipated. Winds will increase later this afternoon into tonight with winds west to southeast from 15 to 25 mph". Firefighters are working on getting all hot spots out before winds kick up.

Members of the public who would like to help on incidents such as these should consider becoming a firefighter for any of the local fire departments. A new class begins the middle of August. Contact your local department for information.

At 9am this morning the fire was turned over to Fire Chief Bart Lassman of Wood River Fire and Rescue. The estimated cost of the fire is currently at \$50,000.