

'Our house is in a pool of ashes:' Some in fire's path luckier than others



A helicopter scoops up water near the wildfire north of Menahga, Minn., Wednesday, May 15, 2013. (Jean Ruzicka / Enterprise)

Thousands of acres, dozens of building burned

By Anna Erickson and Jean Ruzicka
Forum News Service

A north-central Minnesota fire grew to an estimated 7,100 acres Wednesday, destroying or damaging dozens of structures, as firefighters struggled to slow it down.

The Green Valley Fire started about 3 p.m. Tuesday and quickly spread in the area north of Menahga due

WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 2013 - 9:38PM

ANNA ERICKSON | PARK RAPIDS ENTERPRISE



0

ADVERTISEMENT

to high winds.

“This is not typical for Minnesota ground fires,” Ron Sanow, public information officer with the Department of Natural Resources, said Wednesday. “It’s big. There’s a lot of residences. We’re going to be here longer. It might be a week before you see many of these trucks and yellow shirts leave the scene.”

The weather Wednesday was better than Tuesday for battling a fire. Temperatures were in the mid-70s with humidity in the 30s. Winds were from the northwest at 10 to 15 mph.

“That’s a better scenario than yesterday,” Sanow said. “If we hold it today, it’s a very good sign and it makes holding it tomorrow that much better. By the weekend, we’re looking at some rain and we’ll hopefully get a lot of rain.”

The size of the Green Valley Fire grew to an estimated 7,100 acres, according to the Minnesota Interagency Fire Center.

An aerial survey will be conducted to better determine the scope of the damage.

Brian Halbasch, Hubbard County deputy sheriff and emergency manager, said about 45 fire departments arrived to fight fires.

Firefighters made progress fighting a fire farther north and in a more sparsely populated area near Red Lake. The incident command team there was moved to the Green Valley Fire near Menahga on Tuesday night, according to a release from the Minnesota Incident Command System.

Halbasch said the Green Valley Fire likely started at the intersection of Hubbard, Wadena and Becker counties, the wind pushing the fire east. After nightfall Tuesday, the wind shifted to the south, he said.

Hubbard County’s damage was as heavy as officials feared it would be, he said. Fifteen structures -- including houses, garages, workshops and gazebos -- were severely damaged or destroyed, he said.

In Wadena County, five houses and 25 outbuildings had been destroyed by the Green Valley Fire, Sheriff Mike Carr said Wednesday afternoon. Three houses and five outbuildings were damaged, and there were 65 people displaced from Wadena County. No injuries were reported, Carr said.

Firefighters continued to battle fires in the Twin Lakes, Blueberry Ridge area.

Gov. Mark Dayton ordered three National Guard helicopters, two Black Hawks with 600-gallon buckets and one aircraft with a 2,000-gallon bucket.

Sanow said that's like dropping two fire department tankers every time they pull the trigger on the bucket.

"We did not experience any injuries and we're very thankful for that, and we're hoping today that the operations go just as smoothly," he added.

Earlier Wednesday, crews were working to create a dozer line, which is a fire line constructed by the front blade of a dozer.

"Our focus today (Wednesday) is keeping it pinned right where it is," Sanow said.

"We're hitting it with everything we hit it with yesterday, plus we've added four more heavy dozers today."

The public is advised that it's not safe to be out there looking around.

Wadena County Road 23 on the southeast side of the fire was closed. The Twin Lakes area was also a priority point. The origin of the fire is still under investigation.

Residents in Hubbard County were able to return to their homes, but many residents are still evacuated.

The Laestadian Lutheran Church in Menahga is the new center for displaced residents. The American Red Cross is assisting in efforts to help displaced residents.

"Right now, the resources in the state of Minnesota are very, very taxed," Sanow added. "Everyone needs to be very careful right now. Don't even think about burning trash or leaves. It's not worth it."

The website mnics.org will have updates on the Green Valley Fire.

Explore related topics:

[NEWS](#)

[LOCAL](#)

[FIRES](#)

[Anna Erickson](#)

Anna Erickson is editor of the Park Rapids Enterprise.

AErickson@parkrapidsenterprise.com

(218) 732-3364

Similar Articles



'Our house is in a pool of ashes:' Some in fire's path luckier than others

NEW VIDEOS: Buildings lost in wildfires raging near Park Rapids

Videos have been posted of buildings lost in the wildfires near Park Rapids and Menahga.

National Guard assists with wildfire efforts

At the direction of Gov. Mark Dayton, the Minnesota National Guard was activated yesterday for State Active Duty to assist with wildfire suppression operations. "Since the Buffalo Ranch and River ...

Wildfire photos from readers

Here are some photos of the wildfire being shared on Facebook and by our readers.

More from around the web:

[Web Site Unavailable](#) (CelebXo)

[22 Gorgeous Patio Ideas](#) (HGTV)

[Carlos Slim Worth \\$73B, Tops Forbes Billionaires List](#) (Fox Business - Video)

[Shania Twain: What Was She Wearing?](#) (Style Goes Strong)

[Where Are They Now? 15 Child Stars Who Have Grown Up!](#) (Styleblazer)

[5 Tips to Stay Active & Fit](#) (www.bostonherald.com)

[20 Musicians with Ugly Singing Faces](#) (Stereotude)

[Sandra Bullock's Son Louis Makes a Grab for Mommy's Sunglasses](#) (E! Online)

[VIDEO: Robin Wright Makes Red Carpet Debut With Younger Actor Boyfriend](#) (CelebXo)

[Buffenbarger: The U.S. Air Force's Billion Dollar Mistake](#) (Roll Call)

Recommended by

ACCOUNT

[Manage My Account](#)

[Manage Home Delivery](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms and Conditions](#)

NEWSPAPER

[Subscribe to the Paper](#)

[Buy Newspaper Prints](#)

CONTACT

[Contact Us](#)

[Get Website Help](#)

[Work With Us](#)

MORE

[JobsHQ](#)

[CarsHQ](#)

[HomesHQ](#)

[Northland Outdoors](#)

[Agweek](#)

SOCIAL

 [AREAVOICES](#)

 [FACEBOOK](#)

 [RSS FEEDS](#)

© Park Rapids Enterprise and Forum Communications Company
PO Box 111 | Park Rapids, Minnesota 56470 | Call us at (218) 732-3364