

Buildings lost in King Fire; 76,376 acres charred



Lake Valley firefighters are on the front lines of the King Fire. Photo/Lake Valley Fire

Updated 10:15pm:

Assessment teams say structures have been lost in the King Fire, but how many has not been determined.

“As soon as it is safe, we will have damage assessment teams enter the area to complete a full assessment and determine the type and number of structures affected,” officials said in a statement.

The fire burning mostly in the Eldorado National Forest, with some in the Tahoe National Forest in Placer County, is at 76,376 acres as of 10pm Sept. 19. It remains at 10 percent containment. The King Fire has set a record for number of air drops with more than 500,000 gallons of retardant used.

A Pollock Pines man who is now in custody allegedly started it Sept. 13. How it was started has not been disclosed. Wayne Allen Huntsman pleaded not guilty Friday. Bail was set at \$10 million.

El Dorado County District Attorney's Office said Huntsman broke into a Pollock Pines house to call 911 Sept. 13 to report the blaze.

The fire spread moderately Friday with most of the activity in the north end between French Meadows and Hell Hole Reservoir.

Officials said, "The north end of the fire had an east wind of 18-20 mph with gust of 38, pushing the fire to the west. Single and group tree torching was observed. There was a spot fire approximately 2 miles ahead of the main fire front requiring resources to withdraw from the area. The east winds and the up canyon winds were in opposition, which helped moderate fire behavior through the mid and lower portions of the fire. Tonight the down canyon winds and east wind are expected to compliment each other. This could bring more active than normal fire activity tonight."

Four people have been injured, but details are not available.

As of Sept. 19, nearly 3,000 people were still on mandatory evacuation. There have been reports of people having their homes burglarized while they are displaced. An evacuation center has been established at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Camino. The latter is taking small pets, the former hasn't had anyone show up.

Highway 50 is open. Westbound traffic is one lane from Riverton to Pollock Pines. For up-to-date road information, click on the state icon at the top of the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

Smoke continues to be an issue in parts of the Lake Tahoe Basin, and in Carson City and Reno. According to the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, air quality monitors in Carson City and Gardnerville are reporting levels of particulate matter in the unhealthy range due to smoke from the King fire in California.

The Lake Tahoe Basin is not in danger and there are no evacuations in Tahoe. The U.S. Forest Service has issued an advisory for people to not hike or backpack in Desolation and Granite Chief wilderness areas. The McKinney Rubicon Trail has been closed. A closure notice has been issued for part of the Eldorado National Forest until the fire is out.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*