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THE NAVAJO NATION

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Navajo Nation Kinlichii Two Fire now under control

Burned 1,655 acres, origin of fire to be investigated

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Kinlichii Two Fire that burned 1,655 acres of pinon pine and juniper forest yesterday is considered 40 percent contained with just a few hot spots flaring this morning.

The origin of the fire, which was first reported around 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, remains unknown. Bureau of Indian Affairs Forestry will conduct an investigation beginning today.

Approximately 66 local residents were evacuated to the Ganado Middle School Tuesday evening, said Selena Manychildren, public information office for the Navajo Department of Emergency Management. No deaths or serious injuries have been reported, she said.

People who live one-half mile outside of the fire perimeter have been allowed back into their homes. Those who live closer are not allowed to return to their homes at this time.

Navajo Rangers reported no residential structures were damaged although two unoccupied structures and several wooden corrals near homes were reported burned. Three structures in the fire were untouched.



*The Kinlichii Two Fire that burned 1,655 jumped U.S. 264 Tuesday afternoon, requiring the highway to be closed for six hours so fire retardant tanker planes could drop their slurry. Ten sorties were required to bring the fire under control.
Stanley Milford, Jr., Photo*

The fire was concentrated mostly one-half mile south of Highway 264, which was closed to traffic between 3 p.m. and reopened at 9 p.m. on Tuesday. However, shifting winds yesterday afternoon caused the fire to jump the highway. Hundreds of spot fires could be seen burning for several miles after dark.

“We had some erratic fire behavior with winds pushing the fire from the southeast to the northwest,” said Pat Willetto, a BIA fire supervisor. “We did try to control it but winds did not allow us to do that. We’ve got a log of bug kill in this area, a lot of beetle damage, so this is really susceptible to fire.”

“We had to shut down (the highway) in order to get our retardant in there,” he said. “We had a lot of smoke pretty much two feet off the pavement here, and that was a very hazardous situation if we had vehicles coming in.”

As many as five BIA fire crews of 20 members each fought the fire. The fire was also fought with 10 sorties of fire retardant with air tankers arriving from Albuquerque and Winslow, Mr. Willetto said.

“At one point we had two heads on the fire so that kind of destroyed our tactics so we had to pull out, regroup, order more personnel there, and at that time it took off to the west and made its run for these structures on the east side of the fire,” Mr. Willetto said.

As of this morning, BIA Forestry Dispatch reported that four fire crews of 20 members each are still on the scene of the fire west of Window Rock, just past the old Cross Canyon Trading Post and the Kinlichii turn-off vicinity.

Dr. Steve Hankins of Sage Memorial Hospital at Ganado reported last night that seven patients had been seen for fire-related complaints. Two were seen for smoke inhalation, one was seen for a migraine headache, one individual who was directing traffic fell and injured a wrist.

A mobile treatment team was dispatched to the Ganado Field House where 17 patients were seen for minor respiratory issues and for routine care. Sage Memorial Hospital is closing for the evening and is standing down from the emergency operation to a small crew till 8 a.m. Wednesday at which time the mobile treatment team will return to the shelters to make assessments.

The Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management declared a State of Emergency in the area.



BIA air tankers from Albuquerque and Winslow were dispatched to help limit the spread of the Kinlichii Two Fire.



Five fire-fighting crews of 20 members each were dispatched to help fight the Kinlichii Two Fire on Tuesday.

The Kinlichii Chapterhouse was being used as a staging area. Volunteers assisted throughout the day to cook. The chapter house remained open throughout the night.

Also assisting was the Navajo Nation Fire Department from Window Rock, Apache County Sheriff’s Department, Ganado Fire Department, Indian Health Service Public Health Nurses and the BIA Roads Department. Navajo Nation Resource Enforcement and Navajo Department of Public Safety are assisted with the evacuation. The Attack Two Incident Management Team from Flagstaff and Navajo Nation Water Resources also assisted.

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