

Local firefighters, volunteers supporting NorCal wildfire efforts

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Wildfires continue to burn in Northern California and communities to the east and south continue to be impacted, according to Cal Fire.

The Carr Fire burning in Shasta County scorched 121,049 acres as of 7:03 p.m. Wednesday, and was 35 percent contained. The fire, burning since July 23, has destroyed over 1,000 residences in and around Redding and continues to threaten over 1,600 structures.

Just a month into the budget year, the state has already spent more than one-quarter of its annual fire budget, at least \$125 million, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection spokesman Mike Mohler said.

Cal Fire said another 488 buildings, including barns and warehouses, have also been destroyed by the fire, which is now the sixth most destructive in California history.

The blaze has forced 38,000 people from their homes and killed six.

In Mendocino County, the Ranch Fire — off Highway 20 near Potter Valley, northeast of Ukiah — as of 7:35 pm had burned 64,514 acres and was 15 percent contained. The River Fire — near Old River Road, near Mile Marker Post 7.9, Hopland — as of 7:36 p.m. had burned 33,398 acres and was 38 percent contained.

The fires have drained fire resources across the region and there are currently more than 30 fire personnel from Humboldt County working fires in other counties or providing mutual aid at home.

Arcata, Blue Lake, Briceland and Miranda have each sent engine companies and personnel to work in Mendocino, a total of five engines and 17 firefighters.

Fortuna, Humboldt Bay, Loleta, Rio Dell and Samoa have seven engines — including three from Humboldt Bay — and 15 firefighters covering CalFire stations in the county.

In a press release from the Arcata Fire Protection District, Arcata Fire Chief Sean McDonald said that local coverage has not been affected.

“Currently, Humboldt County fire agencies are actively assisting areas being ravaged by the seemingly explosive escalation of wildfire devastation,” he wrote, before adding, “local agencies are contributing personnel and fire engines to assist CalFire in protecting communities suffering severe depletion of resources. Due to strong

commitment from remaining career and volunteer personnel at their home stations, local response to emergencies have not been sacrificed.”

Humboldt County has taken steps to assist those who have been forced to evacuate from the fires and on Tuesday the county Office of Emergency Services posted links to the ways local residents can assist fire victims.

One of the ways to help is to donate money or M95 masks to Pay It Forward Humboldt.

“We work directly with county OES and we are listed on their webpage,” said Desirae Handley, president and co-founder of the nonprofit. “We work directly with government agencies and non-government agencies to get them [fire victims] what they need when they need it as efficiently as possible.”

Handley, who was in Redding overnight from Friday into Saturday as the Carr Fire exploded, said that they have established drop off sites at businesses across the county where you can leave donations.

“Because we are only asking for masks and gift cards we can have more drop off sites,” she said. “We have sites across the county so whatever city you are in you will be able to find a business to drop off donations.”

Handley said that they have collected about \$3,000 so far and she said that the latest delivery Amazon contained about 15 packages filled with masks and gift cards.

“For people who are hesitant to donate money we have three years of being effective managers of the donations,” Handley said.

Pay It Forward Humboldt was created three years ago in response to fires burning in Mendocino County and Handley said that she and friends asked each other how they could help and came up with the idea.

“We realized that there wasn’t really a place for donations management in the county and that’s what we try to provide,” Handley said, “we work with other non-profits and coordinate with them to contact the actual families so that we can supplement their needs.”

First District Humboldt County Supervisor Rex Bohn spent a few days in Redding and then spent Tuesday night in Weaverville where he cooked food for fire crews there. Bohn said that it’s the spirit of Humboldt, the willingness to help others that got him on the road.

“What we try and do is fill a void where we can help out,” Bohn said as he headed back to Humboldt County Wednesday afternoon. “We have changed the name of the fundraiser at Redwood Capital to Humboldt Cares Northern California Fund because of the fires in Lake and Mendocino counties. The people of Humboldt are more than

generous and it's a way for us to pay it forward and be so damn thankful it's not happening to us"

Bohn is also the current president of the Rural County Representatives of California, a lobbying group that represents 35 counties in California.

"In the last four years we have raised and given more than \$2 million to fire ravaged rural counties," Bohn said. "Those funds go directly to helping people recover. Say what you want about urban and suburban areas, rural counties are where they come to recreate."

If you wish to donate to fire victims you can do so by checking the county OES incident page at humboldt.gov/2383/Incident-Information and you can access Pay It Forward Humboldt at their Facebook page, www.facebook.com/payitforwardhumboldt/.

For fire information, check the Cal Fire incident page at www.fire.ca.gov/current_incidents.

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