**Wind-fueled wildfire causes evacuation in Cottonwood Heights**
September 1, 2015

<https://www.ksl.com/index.php?sid=36300227&nid=481>



COTTONWOOD HEIGHTS — There were tense moments for more than two dozen residents on Salt Lake County's east bench near Cottonwood Heights and Sandy on Tuesday because of a fast-moving wildfire.

About 30 homes were evacuated and an additional 30 threatened by the wind-fueled Quail Hollow Fire near Wasatch Boulevard.

"It's kind of surreal," said Lowell Lyon, a resident who was forced to leave his house Tuesday. "I could smell the smoke. … I (wondered), 'What's this big fire truck doing in front of my house and all this activity.' Then my wife informed me that they told us to evacuate. Then it dawned on me, 'Oh, this is right here. We need to leave. This is big.'"

Lyon said he grabbed photographs and left the rest to fate. After getting his family to safety at another home, he started a phone tree to alert other residents about what was happening.

The evacuation order was lifted about 3 p.m. and everyone was allowed to return to their homes. Only one outbuilding was reported damaged in the 15-acre fire. There were no reports of injuries. Fire officials were hoping to have the fire contained by 10 p.m.

FAA has issued a TFR over Cottonwood Heights. Keep your drones at home. <http://t.co/aEITSXZkSh> [#QuailHollow](https://twitter.com/hashtag/QuailHollow?src=hash) [#utfire](https://twitter.com/hashtag/utfire?src=hash) [pic.twitter.com/sCHUcmNwY6](http://t.co/sCHUcmNwY6)

— jordan (@jortron) [September 1, 2015](https://twitter.com/jortron/status/638785442188537856)

The scare for residents started about 10 a.m. when a fire was spotted near 9322 S. Wasatch Blvd. Investigators believe a power transformer exploded, sparking the brush fire.

The fire swept through a popular hiking area in a gully northwest of La Caille restaurant and near a water treatment plant.

The area between about 9300 South and 9500 South, and from Wasatch Boulevard to 2900 East was evacuated. Evacuated streets included Greenhills Drive, Treasure Way and Despain Way.

A shelter was set up at St. Thomas More Catholic Church, 3015 E. Creek Road, for displaced residents who needed it.

Motorists were also advised to avoid Wasatch Boulevard during the afternoon commute. The road remained closed from 9400 South to 9600 South Tuesday evening except to residents who needed access to their homes. Police estimated it would reopen at 9 p.m. and then close again for roughly three more hours of work at 7 a.m. Wednesday.

Motorists are advised to use Little Cottonwood Canyon Road or Highland Drive as alternate routes during the closures, said Cottonwood Heights Police Lt. Mark Askerlund.

Some residents nervously watched from their back decks as Black Hawk helicopters flew directly over their homes and dumped buckets of water in the gully area, and hand crews climbed the steep terrain to try to stop the fire from advancing.

Thirty fire crews — from the Bureau of Land Management, Unified Fire Authority, Sandy and some driving Nevada wildfire vehicles — totaling 90 firefighters were battling the flames Tuesday afternoon. A small plane was also being used to drop retardant, and two Blackhawk helicopters were dumping water on the blaze, Unified Fire spokesman Rob Morley said.

The biggest challenges for fighting the fire were strong down-canyon and swirling winds, Morley said, in addition to the rough terrain of mostly scrub oak and brush.

**Contributing:** Faith Heaton Jolley, Paul Nelson, Sandra Yi, Nkoyo Iyamba, Andrew Adams, Alex Cabrero

Part A: Succession

1. Compare the burned area to the non-burned area.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Burned Area | Unburned Area |

1. Identify the **type** of succession occurring in the burned area *and* the **stage** of succession it is in. What information allowed you to make these predictions?

1. Identify the costs and benefits associated with a wildfire.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Costs | Benefits |

1. Identify plant adaptations observed in the burned area.

Part B: Soils

1. Compare the hydrophobicity of the soil in the burned and unburned area.
2. How does hydrophobic soil affect the water cycle and the ecosystem?
3. Collect soil samples from the burned and unburned area. In the field, determine the following:

Burned:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Physical Properties** |  | **Chemical Properties** |  |
| Temperature |  | pH |  |
| Moisture |  | Nitrogen (N) |  |
|  |  | Phosphorous (P) |  |
|  |  | Potassium (K) |  |

Unburned:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Physical Properties** |  | **Chemical Properties** |  |
| Temperature |  | pH |  |
| Moisture |  | Nitrogen (N) |  |
|  |  | Phosphorous (P) |  |
|  |  | Potassium (K) |  |

Part C: Geology

1. Identify two types of rock seen here:
2. Why do we see different types of rock here?
3. What is one piece of evidence you can see that tells us glaciers were once here?
4. What is one piece of evidence you can see that tells us Lake Bonneville was here? Was the site of this geologic park ever under the waters of Lake Bonneville?
5. What two segments of the Wasatch fault line have been measured as most active? Is that data conclusive?
6. Is the Wasatch fault located at a tectonic plate boundary?