

News-Journal Online presents a *SPEED Magazine* feature

July 3, 1998

Postponement of race better late than never**MY TWO CENTS**

By KEN WILLIS

DAYTONA BEACH - A year ago, Daytona International Speedway officials announced their plans to install lights and make the 1998 Pepsi 400 the first night stock-car race at the speedway.

When discussing what time the race would start on that Saturday night, most snickered and suggested it would depend on how quickly they could dry the track following the afternoon rain.

Who would've known, or even imagined, that lack of rain could possibly come into play?

Dry weather on qualifying and race days used to be called "Bill France weather," due to the late Big Bill's legendary prowess for dodging rain and postponements. Certainly, the old man would've never wanted to be associated with this kind of hell.

Big Bill's son, Bill France Jr., had one of the shortest meetings in NASCAR history early Thursday morning when he and a handful of speedway officials made the obvious call - postponing the Pepsi 400 until Oct. 17.

No one around here can possibly be thinking beyond the next weather report, but it might help to consider that on Oct. 17, this will be a bad memory. And not only will a comfortable fall evening of racing be on tap, but your mind will likely be on that day's Auburn-Florida or Clemson-FSU games, as well as the pitching matchups for the upcoming World Series.

How far away does that seem?

Right thing to do

The speedway was a strange place to be Thursday morning. The signs were up, the usual checkerboard bunting was in place (even the never-ending rows of garbage cans were decorated), and even a handful of RVs were in their parking spots. The fans who had arrived early were busy packing away the coolers and tarps, and even at the mature hour (for race fans) of 10:30 a.m., only a few were toting open cans of Busch.

Inside the garage area, sitting in the race-site NASCAR headquarters trailer, Bill France Jr. was assuming the strategy we've all been reduced to - shaking his head and wondering when it will all end.

France, president of NASCAR and head of the speedway's parent company, had remained at the speedway until 2:30 the night before, monitoring the situation in the security office. He returned at 6:30 Thursday morning and knew what to do.

"We wanted to get an assessment of what the area was like," France said. "And we said all along we were gonna do what we felt was the right thing to do."

Some will say the postponement announcement should've come days earlier, although a few days ago the situation had improved and the race not only looked like a definite go, but a welcome diversion. And it's not like this happens often enough to allow an

educated guess.

'We live here too'

France is fortunate enough to possess the resources necessary to lend a hand. Along with John Graham, the speedway president, he's done that - volunteering firefighting equipment and personnel to the massive effort.

"We live here too, like everyone else does," said France, who has lived here for 63 of his 65 years. "We want to make the right decisions for the whole community. We happen to be fortunate that we have that equipment, but I think the whole community is doing what it can."

Outside the NASCAR trailer, the smell of smoke was stronger than even the late hours of the 24 Hours. It was nearly lunchtime, and the schedule said there should be a line of cars snaking around the garages and through technical inspection. But the garage doors were slammed shut, and NASCAR officials were sitting on nearby picnic tables plotting strategies for getting home.

For once, no one was complaining about restrictor plates, spoiler angles or chassis setup. Too bad what it takes to remind everyone of their importance in the scheme of things.

"This will be a bump in the road as far as our events go at this track," France said. "But it's certainly not just a bump for those people who lost their homes."

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Pepsi 400 postponement turns sold-out Daytona speedway into a ghost town

BYLINE: Tom McCollister

DATELINE: Daytona Beach

BODY:

The lights of Daytona International Speedway won't shine on the July 4 Pepsi 400 as planned this weekend. Race officials postponed Saturday's historic event early Thursday morning because wildfires continue to plague Daytona Beach and surrounding areas.

"Conditions being the way they are now, we don't think there's room for the race and the fire," NASCAR President Bill France Jr. said. "And the fire is winning."

The race has been rescheduled for Oct. 17, three weeks before the season-ending NAPA 500 race south of Atlanta. All Pepsi 400 tickets will be honored at that time, but there will be no refunds.

"Postponing this race is the right thing to do," Speedway President John Graham said. "Our manpower, facilities and resources will remain completely devoted to our community until this crisis is over. The fires have not directly affected the 480-acre Speedway facility."

The postponement was announced an hour before the gates were to open, turning the speedway into a ghost town. Hundreds of fans in a wide variety of vehicles who had lined up for infield vantage points turned and left.

"It's too dangerous for everybody," said racing fan Mark Smith of Dalton, Ga. "We're breathing soot and everything else right now. There are ashes falling out here. Just imagine what it's doing at the racetrack."

NASCAR drivers and teams, scheduled to qualify Thursday night, headed back to their race shops.

"In some ways, it's like a 'snow day' at school, where you sit there and wonder what the heck you are going to do," said Jeremy Mayfield, driver of the No. 12 Mobil 1 Ford. "It's not that neat feeling, though, because I'd be wanting to go outside and play when I was a kid. If I have a weekend off now, I think about racing somewhere. I'd love to be racing at Daytona Saturday night, but I bet everybody else would be, too."

The Atlanta Journal, July 3, 1998

All 143,000 grandstand seats were sold out for the race, billed as the largest night sports event ever. The Pepsi 400 would have been the first night NASCAR race at Daytona International Speedway and the first motor sports event televised by a network during prime time.

Officials were forced to postpone the race after wind-driven wildfires roared to life Wednesday afternoon and evening just north of the speedway, forcing thousands of people in Ormond Beach and Daytona Beach to evacuate.

Daytona Beach and Volusia County authorities also closed roads because of fires. A ride from the Orlando airport to the speedway, which usually takes less than an hour, took more than three hours Thursday.

"We are all very frustrated," said Ralph Sheheen, chief auto racing reporter for CBS, which was to televise the race. "We all had this date circled on our calendars. There was a real buzz among fans, teams and CBS."

"The October weekend was the logical choice," said Mike Helton, NASCAR's vice president for competition. "There's two opportunities left in the '98 season, two weeks from now, and the next is Oct. 17."

"We felt like, with the level that the fire elevated itself last night, with that intensity and level of damage it jumped to last night, trying to get to two weeks from now was not as logical as Oct. 17."

This is the first time a NASCAR event has been postponed because of fire. But NASCAR has had two other memorable postponements --- a 1993 snow storm in Atlanta postponed a race at Hampton, and sand storms in Phoenix two years ago postponed that race.

"Needless to say, we would prefer to be running the race," France said. "And I know everybody in town would prefer for us to be running the race. But nobody is thinking that what's going on out there (fire) is a better deal."

"(This is what happens) when Mother Nature or an act of God gets into the playing picture," Helton said. "We're an outdoor sport and depend on the environment outside. It's the price we pay sometimes."

On Tuesday, NASCAR had announced that the race was still on.

"That was the course we were on through (Wednesday)," Helton said. "But during the night, it simply took a very sharp turn and a very quick movement to the negative side. And that changed our whole philosophy."

GRAPHIC: Graphic :

WHERE TO CALL

Visitors heading to Florida should call ahead to check road and weather conditions if they plan to visit an area hit by fires and smoke. Visitors also might want to stop at Florida Welcome stations to check on possible road closures or detours. Here are numbers to call:

Florida tourism information: 1-888-246-8728.

Volusia County tourism information: 1-800-544-0415.

Florida Department of Transportation: 1-800-342-3557.

Florida's Space Coast Office of Tourism: 1-800-872-1969.

Florida Division of Emergency Management: 1-850-413-9900.

The Atlanta Journal, July 3, 1998

Photo :

Track workers load tire rims onto a truck Thursday after Saturday's running of the Pepsi 400 stock car race was postponed because of heavy smoke from wildfires burning along Florida's east coast near Daytona Beach. The race has been rescheduled for Oct. 17. / CHRIS O'MEARA / Associated Press

Photo :

Detoured traffic from I-95 creeps Thursday past an entrance to Daytona International Speedway, heading for the A1A escape route. / MARK FOLEY / Associated Press

LOAD-DATE: July 4, 1998

Joke
for the firefighters to wear. Needless to say, the generosity and community spirit has been overwhelming, and an inspiration to us all.

The Gov't has done its share as well
I'm proud of the help that the government has been able to provide. ~~As Director Witt mentioned,~~ nearly every federal agency has been involved in this all-out, well orchestrated effort. ~~There are even teams of specially trained Americorp volunteers who have been working closely~~ with local fighters. We are doing everything we can and we will not stop. And today I am pleased to announce three new measures we are taking: First, we will help with the drought. Florida's farmers have suffered greatly from the ongoing drought and today, at my direction, Sec. Glickman has declared all Florida counties eligible for emergency loans for farmers. Second, the Dept. of Labor is allocating \$1 million for jobs that will expedite the recovery process. And FEMA has announced it will extend individual assistance to XXX more counties. This assistance will provide temporary housing and crisis counseling, help repair homes, and replace essential items.

until everything is rebuilt
Today there is hope. ~~I can see here that~~ together we have won the battles and together we will win this war. You know, there are some who say that America doesn't have any heroes anymore. I'd say they haven't been looking in the right places. This summer, America's heroes aren't up in space fighting asteroids, they are right here in this tent and out there protecting the land and our neighbors. As America's heroes you are giving your all to help in any way you can, sacrificing time with loved ones so that other families may be together, and put your lives on the line, time and time again. Every single one of you is an American hero. And as you continue your work, America is standing with you every step of the way.

[As the Bible says, "You were wearied with the length of your way, but you did not say, "It is hopeless." You found new life for your strength." (Isaiah 57:10.) Again, thank you for your for strength, your hard work and for renewing our faith.]

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Today then

With your efforts & the prayers of all Americans, we can turn & conquer these fires.

Right here in this tent, I see people who have sac. time w/ loved ones so that their families can stay together, risked lives time & again to protect our land. Ev. Am. Hero. Thank

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1:00 draft

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS FOR FIRE FIGHTERS EVENT
DAYTONA, FLORIDA
JULY 9, 1998**

Acknowledge: Sec. Glickman; Dir. Witt; Gov. Chiles; Sen. Graham; Sen. Mack; Rep Corrine Brown; Rep. Peter Deutsch; Rep. Karen Thurman; Karen Perry, Palm Coast elementary teacher; Randy Holmes, Palm Coast Fire Department, Edie XXX, Logistic Chief of the Unified Fire Command; Rex XXX head of the Unified Fire Command.

A week ago Daytona's legendary track was set to host one of the largest nighttime sports events ever, the Pepsi 400. Instead, it serves as a vital command post in your firefighting efforts, and the rescue workers here are working as hard and as fast as any pit crew you'll see in NASCAR. I'd like to recognize Bill Frances of NASCAR and John Graham of the Daytona International Speedway and their organizations for postponing the long awaited race, as well as the many competitors, their crews, and the 150,000 fans for understanding the decision.

I know that all of you are off-duty and I am taking away from your precious time to rest up, so I will be brief. The Vice President was here 11 days ago to meet with residents and told me about the all that you have been through. I wanted to come here to thank you personally. All across America, people have been thinking of the people of Florida and praying for the many brave souls who have put their lives on the line to battle the blazes.

I am impressed by the way you have all worked together as a team. Many of you have come from all corners of America to lend a hand to local firefighters who have been braving the flames for the past 21 days. Along with all of the 4000 firefighters, I'd like to recognize the many Public Works Departments across the state for their crucial work cutting fire lines and clearing fields. Thanks to the outstanding containment and recovery efforts of everyone, most of the communities have been saved from fires, and are safe and open to residents and visitors. And the rest will be rebuilt and replanted with this same speed and determination. Florida is still the "State of Hospitality and Sunshine."

Your efforts over the past weeks reflects what is best about America: resilience and courage under daunting conditions; neighbors helping neighbors; ~~grass roots support from nearly every state in our union~~; and a spirit of volunteerism expressed by so many large-hearted people across the country. In addition to the remarkable accounts we have heard today, I've heard stories of hundreds of residents who ~~for weeks~~ ^{we've heard} have lost sleep and wages to take on second jobs staffing shelters, fighting fires, directing traffic and seeing to it that everyone is cared for. I've heard of hotel managers providing free rooms; church members and restaurant workers cooking up free food in every possible pot; and Laundromat owners cleaning the soot and ash from front-line uniforms. I even heard about the truckloads of bananas that were mistakenly donated after Volusia County put out the word that bandanas were needed for the firefighters to wear. Needless to say, the generosity and community spirit has been overwhelming, and an inspiration to us all.

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July 3, 1998

Firefighters from across nation aid Florida

News-Journal Wire Services

TALLAHASSEE - Hundreds of firefighters and tons of equipment from across the nation are pouring into Florida to fight wildfires that have burned thousands of acres and destroyed scores of homes and businesses.

As of Wednesday, more than 4,000 firefighting personnel were battling blazes in northeast Florida and other parts of the state.

Almost 2,200 firefighters have been brought in from 41 states. They have joined 2,081 Florida-based personnel - 562 National Guard troops, 1,000 state employees from the state Division of Forestry, 160 U.S. Forest Service personnel and 359 local firefighters who have been dispatched from throughout the state.

Firefighters are limited to working 14- or 21-day periods so there is a constant rotation.

"Florida has depleted most of the resources here on the East Coast and we are trying to give the other folks a rest break," said Tallahassee logistics chief Joe Duran, a U.S. Forestry Service employee from Santa Barbara, Calif.

Firefighters arrive at staging areas in Tallahassee and Ocala where they receive briefings and are matched with equipment before being dispatched around the state. A third staging area may be opened in Jacksonville.

The most recent arrivals are federal, state and county forestry employees from California, Montana, Idaho, Arizona, New Mexico and other western states, Duran said.

Out-of-state fire engines, tanker trucks, bulldozers and other equipment has been trucked to Tallahassee and Ocala.

The biggest need now are tractor plows, the primary equipment used to battle wildfires in the south, said Gene Madden, spokesman for the Florida Division of Forestry. Firefighters use tractor plows to cut firelines to stop wildfires from spreading.

"We have depleted all tractor-plow units that were available in the southeastern U.S.," Madden said. "They are all here in the state of Florida."

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Lt. Gov. Buddy MacKay

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nearly 100 people, many of them firefighters.

The total cost of fighting the fires has topped \$110 million and losses were estimated at \$276 million. The federal government has contributed \$66 million.

More than 100,000 people had been evacuated from their homes, though many were allowed to return this weekend.

Firefighters continued to fight three active wildfires in Flagler County on Monday.

Larry Scovotto of the Florida Fire Chiefs Association said 1,421 firefighters were battling the blazes using 357 pieces of firefighting equipment, including 26 tankers and five helicopters.

Humidity remained high, helping curb the spread of the blazes but also trapping smoke close to the ground.

Lt. Charles Davis said fire officials are still mapping the blazes in an attempt to determine where they are and if they can be contained.

"They're still doing infrared intelligence so they know where the hot spots are," he said.

Davis said about 40 houses in Flagler have been destroyed by fire.

In Volusia County, all mandatory evacuation orders were lifted Sunday after a scattered, steady rain on Sunday helped firefighters get the upper

He said there would be security and identity checks to guarantee an orderly return by residents, many of whom were anxious to find out whether their homes had been damaged.

MacKay said there had been one death indirectly related to the fires: A Flagler County resident suffered a heart attack while being evacuated, then later died at a hospital.

Flagler County volunteers Monday handed out blue ribbons which they asked local residents to tie around their car antennas as a sign of appreciation for the work of firefighters and emergency teams.

The firestorm has devoured some 458,300 acres in Florida since Memorial Day. State officials estimate that nearly 2,000 fires have damaged or destroyed 222 homes and businesses and injured



Thousands of acres of land have been scorched and other hot spots remain in Flagler County

Acknowledge: Sec. Glickman; James Lee Witt; Gov. Chiles; Sen. Graham; Rep. XXXX; FEMA Dir. Edie XXX, Logistic Chief of the Unified Fire Command; Rex XXX head of the Unified Fire Command.

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I know that all of you are off-duty and I am taking away from your precious time to rest up, so I will be brief. The Vice President told me about the destruction here in Florida, and I wanted to be here today to personally thank you, and thank you on behalf of the nation, for your bravery, your determination, and for putting your lives on the line to save your fellow citizens. All across America, people have been thinking of and praying for the people of Florida and rooting on the many brave souls who have been part of the emergency teams. Along with all the firefighters, I'd like to recognize the many Public Works Departments across the state for their crucial work of cutting fire lines and clearing fields. I'd also like to thank Volusia [Va-LOO-sha] County for making emergency preparedness a top priority and participating in an intense emergency training program with FEMA earlier this year [chk]. That preparation and commitment has clearly made a difference in your ability to react to the constantly changing threats of the fires.

Many of you have come from all corners of the nation to lend a hand to local firefighters who have been braving the flames for 21 days. Your efforts symbolize what is best about America: the resilience and courage under daunting conditions; neighbors helping neighbors; the assistance of citizens from nearly every state in our union; and the spirit of volunteerism that fueled donations and services of so many large-hearted people. I've heard stories of hundreds of residents who for weeks have lost sleep and wages to take on second jobs of staffing shelters, firefighting and seeing to it that everyone is cared for. I've heard of hotel managers providing free rooms, church members feeding thousands, and Laundromat owners cleaning the soot and ash from front-line uniforms. I even heard about the truckloads of bananas that were mistakenly donated after Volusia County put out the word that bandanas were needed for the firefighters to wear. Needless to say, the generosity and community spirit has been overwhelming, and an inspiration to us all.

I'm proud of the help that the government has been able to provide. As Dir. Witt mentioned, nearly every federal agency has been involved in an all-out effort. And teams of specially trained Americorp volunteers are working closely with local fighters to battle the blazes. We are doing everything we can and we will not stop: I am proud to announce three new steps that we are taking. Florida's farmers have suffered greatly from the ongoing drought and today, at my direction, Sec. Glickman's has declared all Florida counties eligible for emergency

loans for farmers. Second, the Department of Labor is providing \$1 million to pay for jobs that will expedite the recovery process. And FEMA is extending individual assistance to more counties. This assistance will provide temporary housing and crisis counseling, repair homes that can still be lived in, and replace essential items that were lost in the fires.

There are some who say that America doesn't have any heroes anymore. I'd say they haven't been looking in the right places. This summer, America's heroes aren't up in space fighting asteroids, they are right here in this tent and out there fighting fires and caring for their community. Every single one of you is an American hero. You have put your lives on the line, you have won the battles and soon will win this war. And America is with you.

[As the Bible says, "You were wearied with the length of your way, but you did not say, "It is hopeless." You found new life for your strength." (Isaiah 57:10.) Again, thank you for your strength, your hard work and for renewing our faith.]

FEMA in has given over \$57 million; The US Forest Service has provided firefighting personnel; The Department of Defense provided airlift support of fire personnel and engines nationwide to Florida; Nearly 100 Americorp members have been deployed for fire clean up; the Civil Air Patrol has been mobilized for the transport of personnel and equipment; The Army Corps of Engineers arranged for the transportation of much-needed ice in six refrigeration trucks to impacted communities; the Public Health Service has sent medical resources to the state.



Daytona Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

July 7, 1998....5:10 edition

Evacuations lifted, roads open . . .

SUNSHINE AND BLUE SKIES RETURN TO DAYTONA BEACH VACATION AREA

Daytona Beach, FL USA - The end of the Fourth of July weekend signaled the beginning of the return to fun in the sun at Daytona Beach. After battling a series of fires that ranged from sporadic to aggressive, the Daytona Beach area is welcoming vacationers this week as families hit the road for their annual summer vacation.

Fires had dotted the landscape of many areas of Florida last week and some major roads were closed, including a long stretch of Interstate 95. "We are pleased to hear from state and local officials that the evacuations put in place last week for Volusia and Flagler Counties have been lifted, and the highways are open," states Larry Fornari, president of the Motel Hotel Association and a hotel owner himself.

"Last week we were advising people about inland fire conditions, road closings and the postponement of the Pepsi 400 NASCAR race at Daytona International Speedway. Thanks to efforts by the fire-fighting team, support personnel and volunteers, the fires were brought under control over the weekend," says Fornari.

"With weather conditions improving this week and with the roads being reopened, we are pleased to roll out the welcome mat for visitors who have planned summer vacations," he adds. Monday saw heavy rains throughout the area which added emphasis to the weekend triumph over pesky fires and cleared the way for the reopening of Interstate 95.

"We were fortunate that the fires did not affect the beach or any of the tourist areas of the Greater Daytona Beach Area; they were located miles from popular beach areas. Motels and tourist facilities were unaffected except by the road closings and are welcoming guests at this time," says Fornari. Visitors can get the latest information relative to a busy summer calendar of events by calling 1-800-854-1234 or checking the area's Internet site at www.daytonabeach-tourism.com on the World Wide Web.

For those who have had to change travel plans, many hotels have relaxed reservation requirements. As a convenience to visitors, some hotels require only twenty-four hour notice to accommodate a change in plans.

-more-

time to rest up, so I will be brief. The Vice President was here 11 days ago [to meet with residents] and told me about the all that you have been through. I wanted to *come here to thank you personally* and thank you on behalf of the nation.] All across America, people have been thinking of the people of Florida and praying for the many brave souls who *are putting* their lives on the line to battle the blazes.

I am *impressed* by the way you have all worked together as a team. *You* have come from all corners of *America* to lend a hand to local firefighters who have been braving the flames for the past 21 days. Along with all of the XXXX firefighters, I'd like to recognize the many Public Works Departments across the state for their crucial work [of]cutting fire lines and clearing fields. I'd also like to thank Volusia [Va-LOO-sha] County for *participating* last year in FEMA's intense emergency training program. That preparation has clearly made all the difference in your ability to react to the constantly changing threats of these devastating fires.

Your efforts over the past weeks *reflects* what is best about America: resilience and courage under daunting conditions; neighbors helping neighbors; citizen support from nearly every state in our union; and a spirit of volunteerism that has sparked donations and services from so many large-hearted people across this country. In addition to the remarkable accounts we have heard today, I've heard stories of hundreds of residents who for weeks have lost sleep and wages to take on second jobs [of]staffing shelters, firefighting, directing traffic and seeing to it that everyone is cared for. I've heard of hotel managers providing free rooms; church members caring for thousands; free food being cooked up in every possible pot; and Laundromat owners cleaning the soot and ash from front-line uniforms. I even heard about the truckloads of bananas that were mistakenly donated after Volusia County put out the word that bandanas were needed for the firefighters to wear. Needless to say, the generosity and community spirit has been overwhelming, and an inspiration to us all.

I'm proud of the help that the government has been able to provide. As Director Witt mentioned, nearly every federal agency has been involved in this all-out, well orchestrated effort. There are even teams of specially trained Americorp volunteers who have been working closely with local fighters. We are doing everything we can and we will not stop: And today I am pleased to announce three new measures we are taking: First, we will help with the drought. Florida's farmers have suffered greatly from the ongoing drought and today, at my direction, Sec. Glickman has declared all Florida counties eligible for emergency loans for farmers. Second, the Dept. of Labor is allocating \$1 million[to pay] for jobs that will expedite the recovery process. And FEMA has announced it will extend individual assistance to XXX more counties. This assistance will provide temporary housing and crisis counseling, help repair homes, and replace essential items.

Today there is hope. I can see here that together we have won the battles and together we will win this war. You know, there are some who say that America doesn't have any heroes anymore. I'd say they haven't been looking in the right places. This

summer, America's heroes aren't up in space fighting asteroids, they are right here in this tent and out there protecting the land and our neighbors. As America's heroes you are giving your all to help in any way you can, sacrificing time with loved ones so that other families may be together, and put your lives on the line, time and time again. Every single one of you is an American hero. And as you continue your work, America is standing with you every step of the way.

[As the Bible says, "You were wearied with the length of your way, but you did not say, "It is hopeless." You found new life for your strength." (Isaiah 57:10.) Again, thank you for your strength, your hard work and for renewing our faith.]



June Shih

07/08/98 11:59:46 AM

Record Type: Record

To: Laura K. Capps/WHO/EOP

cc:

bcc:

Subject: Re: do you mind taking a look before I give to Waldman? It needs to be snipped. thanks

looks good. i've put suggested cuts in brackets; new lang. in ital.

Laura K. Capps



Laura K. Capps

07/08/98 11:47:33 AM

Record Type: Record

To: June Shih/WHO/EOP

cc:

Subject: do you mind taking a look before I give to Waldman? It needs to be snipped. thanks

by the way, the Armeggeddon reference at the end is from MW.

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS FOR FIRE FIGHTERS EVENT
DAYTONA, FLORIDA
JULY 9, 1998**

Acknowledge: Sec. Glickman; James Lee Witt; Gov. Chiles; Sen. Graham; Rep. XXXX; FEMA Dir. Edie XXX, Logistic Chief of the Unified Fire Command; Rex XXX head of the Unified Fire Command.

A week ago Daytona's legendary track was set to host one of the largest nighttime sports events ever, the Pepsi 400. Today this track is serving as a vital command post *in your firefighting efforts*, and the rescue workers here are working as hard and as fast as any pit crew you'll see in the NASCAR. I'd like to recognize Bill Frances of NASCAR and John Graham of the Daytona International Speedway and their organizations for postponing the [long awaited] race, as well as the many competitors, their crews, and [the 150,000] fans for understanding the decision.

I know that all of you [here] are off-duty and I am taking away from your precious

FAX TRANSMITTAL SHEET

United States Department of Agriculture
Office of the Secretary
Intergovernmental Affairs

14th and Independence Avenue, S.W.
Room 219-A
Washington, D.C. 20250

Telephone Number (202) 720-6643
Fax Number (202) 720-8819

DATE:

July 2, 1998

TO:

Mr. Kris Baldwin

FAX NUMBER:

456-2525

NUMBER OF PAGES (INCLUDING COVER SHEET): _____

FROM:

☒ MARIA HERNANDEZ, DIRECTOR

☐ MARY MCNEIL, DIRECTOR NATIVE AMERICAN PROGRAMS

☐ SHERRY CAMPBELL, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

☐ BLAIRE MALKIN, ASSISTANT

SUBJECT: _____

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DRAFT

July 7, 1998

MEMORANDUM TO: KRIS BALDERSTON
DEPUTY CABINET SECRETARY
CABINET AFFAIRS
THE WHITE HOUSE

FROM: MARIA HERNANDEZ, DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

RE: SUMMARY OF USDA AGENCIES RESPONSE TO FLORIDA
FIRES

Currently, approximately 475,000 acres have been scorched by fires in the state of Florida since May, including about 155,000 acres of forest land valued at \$185 million.

Aside from forest and timber losses, damage in the agricultural sector *from the fires* is relatively limited: Volusia and Flagler Counties suffered losses to citrus crops and widespread damage to ferneries due to the fires. In addition, some dairy cattle have been lost due to smoke.

However, *severe drought conditions* in the central, northern, and Panhandle areas of the State have caused extensive damage to Florida's crop and livestock production. The Panhandle area has suffered for three consecutive years from natural disaster, including flooding, hurricanes, and now the current drought, which began in April 1998.

Approximately 18,000 producers in Florida will suffer from crop and livestock losses of up to \$160 million. Approximately 600,000 acres of summer crops are severely affected. The State's 90,000 acres of corn are expected to suffer a 95 percent loss. Most dryland crops in north central and western areas of the State are drought-stricken to the extent that yields will be 10 percent of normal.

Peanuts have been 90 percent planted; however, many acres were planted late and are subject to possible frost damage.

On the livestock side, virtually no hay has been harvested due to drought. 1.2 million acres of grazing land have been severely damaged. Feed corn supplies for Florida's dairies are in

jeopardy as extreme heat may damage pollination in irrigated corn fields.

The entire State is approved for Emergency (EM) loans due to flooding that occurred in February 1998. All counties in the State are also eligible for EM loans due to fires. On June 24, 1998 Florida Governor Lawton Chiles requested an additional USDA Secretarial disaster designation for the entire State to cover losses due to drought and heat.

Secretary Glickman is expected to approve this request on July 9 and declared all Florida counties eligible for Emergency loans due to drought. This Secretarial declaration also makes Small Business Administration loans available to agriculture related businesses.

USDA's Risk Management Agency offers crop insurance covering 25 different crops grown in Florida. Policies in force cover 750,000 acres of Florida crop land, with a total insurance liability approaching \$700 million. The most significant crops insured are tomatoes, potatoes, peanuts, nursery crops, and citrus. Producers who purchased crop insurance will be covered for losses due to drought or fire and should contact their local crop insurance agent.

In addition, USDA's Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) will be a big factor for disaster assistance for producers of noninsured crops. Aquaculture losses may be severe as well. It has been discovered that fresh water has encroached on clam beds, which has resulted in high death losses. Significant oyster losses are also expected.

A team of specialists from Farm Service Agency (FSA) Headquarters visited Florida June 22-25 to help ensure timely and accurate responses to applications for NAP assistance. USDA Farm Service Agency County Committees are meeting across the State to see whether crops meet the 35 percent loss for NAP eligibility. Two-thirds of the counties in the State in an area from Marion County to and including the Panhandle will probably have areas approved for agricultural and aquaculture losses.

Unfortunately, USDA lost the authority to implement a livestock feed assistance program in the 1996 Farm Bill. Emergency funds previously generated through the Disaster Reserve Assistance

Program (DRAP) from the sale of the feed grain reserve have been exhausted. USDA has no authority to replenish the reserve. Therefore, we are limited in the assistance we can give to livestock producers.

Animal Plant & Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) Veterinary medical officers are assisting in the area with displaced animal care.

Natural Resource & Conservation Service's (NRCS) will meet with county governments this week to discuss seeding along streams, rivers, lakes and other areas that local governments determine needed. NRCS is coordinating with the US Forest Service and Florida State Department of Forestry.

Florida has used some of the existing food stock (commodities) but has not requested any additional food as of this time. No additional support has been needed to date. Food & Nutrition Services (FNS) is ready to provide additional food stock if requested.

A total of 65 fire engines from throughout the West Coast, complete with approximately 300 firefighters, have added 36,500 gallons of pumping capacity to the Florida effort. The engines came from many agencies including the Forest Service, National Park Services, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and private contractors.

cc: Greg Frazier
Tom Amontree

OFFICE OF CABINET AFFAIRS

 interoffice memorandum

TO: ☐ Kris M. Balderston
☐ David S. Beaubaire
☐ Jon P. Jennings
☐ Lisa J. Levin
☐ Thurgood Marshall, Jr.
☐ Anne McGuire
☐ Maya Seiden
☒ Laura Capps
☐ _____
☐ _____

FROM: Elisabeth Sarah Steele
(202) 456-7074

DATE: 7/7/98

☐ For your signature.
☐ For your information.
☒ Per your request.
☐ Please send to Scheduling.
☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____

70. VRS Balderton

TALKING POINTSFlorida

(Alachua, Baker,
Bradford, Brevard,
Citrus, Clay,
Columbia, Dixie,
Duval, Flagler,
Gilchrist, Gulf,
Hamilton, Hernando,
Lafayette, Lake, Lee, Levy,
Madison, Marion, Nassau, Okaloosa,
Orange, Osceola, Pasco, Putnam, St. Johns,
Seminole, Sumter, Suwannee, Taylor, Union,
Volusia, and Walton Counties.

Up to \$600,000 Grant Approval
(\$200,000 to be awarded initially)

DRAFT

- ▶ The Labor Department is approving a grant of up to of \$600,000 for the Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security, of which \$200,000 will be awarded immediately. These funds will supplement an additional \$400,000 in National Reserve Account funds awarded to the State earlier this year in response to the severe weather and flooding produced by the El Nino storms. The funds are being awarded to create 200 temporary jobs to assist in the cleanup and restoration in areas in the State affected by wildfires since May 25.
- ▶ We are glad that we can be of assistance and use our special dislocated worker reserve funds to help States and grantees when they encounter major, unexpected job disruptions in their communities affected by disasters such as the wildfires.
- ▶ The Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) has identified 34 counties that will be targeted for assistance under this grant. If additional counties are declared eligible for Public Assistance by the FEMA, they can be included under this grant.
- ▶ Individuals eligible to participate in the project are those who have been temporarily dislocated as a result of the fires, the long-term unemployed and other eligible dislocated workers. The State estimates that about 700 individuals have been dislocated as a result of the wildfires.
- ▶ Typical projects will include general cleanup, restoration of roads and docks, and providing humanitarian assistance at temporary shelters and food sites.
- ▶ Individuals participating in the project will perform specific jobs such as construction helpers, security guards, construction equipment operators and other project support-related activities.
- ▶ The following services will be provided through the project: Outreach, intake, assessment and temporary jobs creation. Support services will be provided such as child care, transportation, clothing and equipment to accomplish work under the project.
- ▶ Participants in this project may perform the same work as other State and local public employees are authorized to perform in the same area.

-2-

DRAFT

Participants must be paid the higher of the Federal, State or local minimum wage or the same prevailing rate of pay as are other individuals employed in similar occupations by the same employer. The total amount of base wages paid to an individual may be as high as \$12,000. Individual participation in the temporary jobs creation project, by statute, cannot exceed six months.

USDA FOREST SERVICE
Fire and Aviation Management

* UPDATED
1230

TO: Chris Balderson
cc Brian Burke

FAX NO: 456 - 2525
720 - 4732

FROM: Denny Truesdale
Assistant Director
202/205-1489

USDA, Forest Service
F&AM
201 14th Street, SW
2nd Floor, SW Wing
P. O. Box 98090
Washington, DC 20090

Message/ Special Instructions:

Chris - per Brian's request.

Here are numbers of people requested and mobilized through the national system. Does not include all of the Florida State, County + volunteers.

Did not have time to do complete write up on all types of firefighting resources such as tractor plows or engines.

Denny

Firefighters 2,591

2

Pages Follow this cover Page

If all pages are not received, call sender at (202) 205-1489
To reply by Fax, dial (202) 205-1272

**FLORIDA FIRE SITUATION
AGENCY AND STATE BREAKDOWNS
FOR 1998**

7 JULY 1998

0830

* 47 states represented (missing Iowa, Rhode Island and Hawaii) + Puerto Rico

* USA + Canada

Federal Agency Resources:

* Bureau of Indian Affairs	90
* Bureau of Land Management	209
* Department of Defense	15
* U.S. Forest Service	1800
* U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	84
* Interagency Dispatch/Fire Caches	207
* National Park Service	97
* National Weather Service	37
* Private Groups/Individuals	52

TOTAL FEDERAL AGENCY RESOURCES = 2591

State Agency Resources:

* Alaska	3
* Alabama	5
* Arkansas	2
* Arizona	3
* California	20
* Colorado	4
* Connecticut	1
* Florida	43
* Georgia	43
* Idaho	42
* Indiana	3
* Kentucky	10
* Massachusetts	7
* Maryland	7
* Maine	7
* Michigan	3
* Minnesota	29

*	Missouri	2
*	Mississippi	8
*	Montana	23
*	North Carolina	150
*	New Hampshire	2
*	New Jersey	14
*	New Mexico	2
*	Nevada	9
*	New York	4
*	Ohio	2
*	Oklahoma	17
*	Oregon	2
*	Pennsylvania	9
*	South Carolina	45
*	Tennessee	20
*	Utah	3
*	Virginia	6
*	Washington	2
*	Wisconsin	25
*	Wyoming	16

TOTAL STATE AGENCY RESOURCES = 593

COMMITTED FIRE RESOURCES**FLORIDA****7 July 1998****0600****Aircraft**

Air Attack	19
Air Tankers	18
Type 1 Helicopters	22
Type 2 Helicopters	18
Type 3 Helicopters	23
Infrared Flight	2
Fixed Plane	1
Single Engine Air Tankers	3

TOTAL = 116**Crews**

Camp Crews	9
Hot Shot Crews	29
Regular Crews	61

TOTAL = 99**Equipment**

Cache Vans	6
Caterers	2
Dozers	8
Engines	376
Engine Strike Teams	9
Fuel Tenders	1
Microwave Systems	3
Miscellaneous	19
Mobile Weather Units	3
Probes	2
Radio Kits	99
Tractor/Plows	53
Water Tenders	13

TOTAL = 594**Overhead****TOTAL = 1811****TOTAL COMMITTED RESOURCES = 2620**

July 7, 1998
Updated 1230

Fire and Aviation Management Briefing Paper, Florida Fires

Aerial Wildfire Suppression:

The Forest Service makes use of a wide range of aircraft to provide wildland fire suppression. In most incidents an Air Tactical Group Supervisor (ATGS) acts as an airborne traffic controller providing traffic separation, target selection and the coordination between ground and aerial forces. This position may be in a fixed-wing or helicopter depending on the situation and staffed by someone with strong suppression skills. The ATGS works with the leadplane over the incident. The leadplane is responsible for the safety of the airtankers over the incident and helps guide the airtankers to the drop zone selected by the ATGS. The airtankers working over any incident vary in size and style of aircraft dropping anywhere between 2,000 to 3,000 gallons of retardant. The aircraft use a chemical base long-acting fire suppression to support ground personnel. All aircraft regardless of size have the capability to select the amount of retardant dropped at any time. This varies based on the fuel type, fire intensity, and objectives of the ATGS. All airtankers are supported at specific airports that have been developed into airtanker bases. These bases have the mixing equipment for quick reload of fire retardant and the capability to safely load, refuel and provide maintenance to the aircraft. In addition they provide support to the aircrews flying the incident.

Safe and Effective Management of Aviation Resources

Safe and effective management of multiple aircraft over wildfires is a demanding and complex task which requires highly skilled professionals working often under extremely difficult and unforgiving circumstances. Although the exact site that fire suppression aviation activities will take place is unknown until fires occur, extensive preplanning regarding operational procedures, air traffic patterns, communication protocols and safety precautions. Specialists who preplan and manage large, complex aviation activities include Aviation Operations (s), who oversee the entire aviation operations, (Aviation) Safety and Technical Assistance teams who provide technical support to the aircraft in the field and the employees managing them. Airspace Management Specialists who design airspace closure areas around fires to ensure that firefighting can operate safely while restricting the public airspace as little as necessary. Of major assistance are the portable Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) towers which provide for positive control of airports which are saturated with firefighting aircraft.

Federal Personnel in Florida

The National response to the Florida wildfires is an integrated, interagency effort with firefighters and management teams from all levels of government as well as private contractors. These resources are mobilized through the national system, coordinated by the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho.

Incident Management Teams

The National Incident Management Teams are made up of individuals from a Geographic Area such as the Great Basin (Idaho, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming) or the Pacific Northwest (Oregon and Washington). The Teams are assigned to Complexes of fires which is a grouping of several large and small fires, usually within a county or groups of adjacent counties. The Teams work under the direction of the responsible land management agency, in this case the USDA Forest Service for the National Forests of Florida, or the State Forester for the Florida Division of Forestry. The teams do not "takeover the fires" or assume a Federal responsibility for the State of Florida fires, but are given delegations of authority from the Division of Forestry, or the county fire officials.

The teams have Operations sections for the actual fire suppression, Planning sections that prepare daily plans and track resources, Finance sections that purchase supplies and prepare pay documents, and Logistics sections that provide for the care and feeding of the personnel.

Fire Crews

The firefighters who work out on the fire lines are formed into 20-person crews. There are Type I, or Interagency Hotshot Crews, and Type 2 crews. The Type 1 crews are organized and trained crews that are stationed throughout the US for responding to large fires suppression. The type 2 crews are agency employees, contractors, or trained personnel from other groups such as Tribal governments that are brought together for the fire assignment. The individuals meet all of the training and experience requirements as the Type 1 crews but do not normal work together throughout the entire season.

The crews do a variety of tasks such as building fire control lines, burning out fuel inside the lines, patrolling the lines for spots that blow over the lines, and mopping up which consists of finding hotspots in the burned out areas and putting them out so they won't return.

Helicopter Aerial Attack Assets

 Helicopters are used to apply water, or water with a foaming agent added, in short turnaround times from open water sources near the fire. As suppression resources they are managed by size with Type I helicopters being the largest and having a capacity of 1,000 gallons or more. Helicopters are assigned to sections of the fire part of the air attack supervisory role is deconfliction of the rotary wing and fixed wing suppression resources. An interagency qualified helicopter manager is assigned to each aircraft. The smaller Type II and Type III helicopters may deliver smaller quantities of water, may be used to allow incident command personnel to observe and direct resources on the ground, and may be used to shuttle ground firefighters into position on the fire line. The smaller helicopters may be used as platforms for rappel operations where firefighters use ropes to reach the ground in areas where there is not time effective ground access to the fire.



Airborne Thermal Infrared Fire Mapping

The USDA Forest Service has two aircraft with the primary purpose of providing aerial infrared fire mapping. These two aircraft operate primarily during the night to provide high resolution infrared imagery to allow the fire operations planning staff to assess priorities in preparing for the next day's operations.

Florida Fire Resource Status -- (from the beginning of the incident, Federal resources committed):

**Total Federal Agency Resources = 2600 OVERHEAD; 125+CREWS; 800+EQUIPMENT;
120+AIRCRAFT**

**Included above: Forest Service = 1800 OVERHEAD; 99 CREWS; 594 EQUIPMENT; 116 AIR-
CRAFT.**

mentioned, nearly every federal agency has been involved in an all-out effort. And teams of specially trained Americorp volunteers are working closely with local fighters to battle the blazes. We are doing everything we can and we will not stop: I am proud to announce three new steps that we are taking. Florida's farmers have suffered greatly from the ongoing drought and today, at my direction, Sec. Glickman's has declared all Florida counties eligible for emergency loans for farmers. Second, the Department of Labor is providing \$1 million to pay for jobs that will expedite the recovery process. And FEMA is extending individual assistance to more counties. This assistance will provide temporary housing and crisis counseling, repair homes that can still be lived in, and replace essential items that were lost in the fires.

There are some who say that America doesn't have any heroes anymore. I'd say they haven't been looking in the right places. This summer, America's heroes aren't up in space fighting asteroids, they are right here in this tent and out there fighting fires and caring for their community. Every single one of you is an American hero. You have put your lives on the line, you have won the battles and soon will win this war. And America is with you.

[As the Bible says, "You were wearied with the length of your way, but you did not say, "It is hopeless." You found new life for your strength." (Isaiah 57:10.) Again, thank you for your strength, your hard work and for renewing our faith.]

FEMA in has given over \$57 million; The US Forest Service has provided firefighting personnel; The Department of Defense provided airlift support of fire personnel and engines nationwide to Florida; Nearly 100 Americorp members have been deployed for fire clean up; the Civil Air Patrol has been mobilized for the transport of personnel and equipment; The Army Corps of Engineers arranged for the transportation of much-needed ice in six refrigeration trucks to impacted communities; the Public Health Service has sent medical resources to the state.

Ferguson and Cathy Warner, as flames surrounded the Village of Pine Run, went up and down the streets of the subdivision gathering the pets which had been left by residents who were forced to leave quickly.

Public Works

Volusia County's Public Works has been integral in this operation, taking care of all transportation needs as far as supplying bulldozers, fuel, fixing fire trucks, placing signage boards and removing trees. For example, the transmission on a North Carolina fire truck went out. County mechanics pulled the truck in that night and by the next morning, it was ready to roll. Our mechanics have been working around the clock so that if anything breaks down they can fix it immediately. Mechanics also go to where the firetrucks break down and fix them on the scene. Our bulldozer operators also worked side by side with the firefighters, cutting fire lines. Also, even though our County was under siege by wildfires, Volusia County Public Works sent gas, diesel fuel, barricades, bulldozers and other support to Flagler County.

Early on in our fight against the wildfires, during a large fire west of Port Orange, one of the County's bulldozer operators was plowing a line around the fire when it spotted over (jumped the fire break) and trapped the dozer operator between two large fires. Concerned for his safety, Steve Edgar, a local private forester, ran on foot after the dozer operator, climbed aboard the dozer and guided the driver through the flames (actually through real flames!) to safety.

Quick thinking on the part of Volusia County Deputy Fire Chief Ken Gaines and two Volusia firefighters helped save a house and a small community north of DeLand. Faced with a huge wall of flame approaching the house at the Lafayette Landing Fly-In north of DeLand, Gaines and his firefighters started a backfire with the hope of eliminating the brush, grass and trees (the fuel for the large fire). This was a tremendous gamble, an incredibly risky move, but they had no other option. Their gamble paid off as the strategy worked, stopping the fire without damage to the homes.

At the Pioneer Trail subdivision west of New Smyrna Beach, firefighters from several agencies -- County Fire Services, St. Lucie County, Palm

To Heather (202) 456-5709

Some suggested anecdotal ideas for President Clinton's visit to Volusia County

The outpouring of support from the community both far and near has been tremendous! People drive to where the firefighters are working, pop the trunks of their car and give them cold beverages, baskets of cookies, food. Deputy Fire Chief Jim Mauney was stopped at a McDonalds when a man in a beat-up old car pulled up next to him, offering a case of water for the firefighters – obviously all the man could afford to give. Within two hours after posting a notice for additional bulldozers and operators on the Volusia County website, we had more heavy equipment than we could handle! Even Volusia County's children want to help -- decorating "goodie" bags of personal items for the firefighters with stickers and crayoned messages of concern.

Local firefighters will have been fighting these wildfires for 21 days (by Thursday). These fires started big time with a lightning storm Friday, June 19.

DeLand District of United Methodist Church since June 30 has taken on the responsibility of feeding dinner to the firefighters housed at Stetson University each night. Approximately 75-100 firefighters per night. The church either purchases the food or gets it donated and they've eaten quite well -- prime rib one night! Janet Kelly, administrative assistant to the district superintendent, has pretty much worked around the clock making these arrangements. One of the few times she left early was when her home in Ormond Beach was evacuated.

Kelly called David Brown, an Ormond Beach dentist with one of the area churches, on July 3 to see if he could help clean the bathrooms in the dormitories at Stetson where the firemen are staying. Brown rounded up a crew of five men in a matter of hours and they cleaned all of the bathrooms in three buildings.

Volusia County animal control officers Peggy Rogers, Greg Anest, Dee

July 3, 1998

Volunteers ease evacuees' distress in county shelters

By **BRENDAN SMITH**
Staff Writer

PORT ORANGE - The cars and ambulances kept coming to Atlantic High School, as evacuees fled smoke and flames in a trail of headlights through the night.

By about 11 p.m. Wednesday, the school's gymnasium at 1250 Reed Canal Road was full with about 100 people with special medical needs and 150 other evacuees from Ormond Beach and the Daytona Beach area. Mainland High School hastily opened to accept the overflow of elderly evacuees.

Atlantic Principal Ron Pagano said some evacuees had left Thursday morning but many planned to stay Thursday night and an additional 50 cots were moved in to increase bed space in anticipation of more evacuations.

"They're watching TV and following it and are anxious," Pagano said. "They want to know when they can get home."

Employees from the Volusia County Health Department and the Red Cross staffed the shelter with dozens of volunteers helping.

Pamela Mihalik, a clerk with the Volusia County Health Department, walked out of the shelter bleary-eyed Thursday morning after more than 12 hours of helping elderly evacuees who were sleeping on dozens of cots inside.

Mihalik, her husband, Frank, and their daughter, Payton, were evacuated themselves after a ring of fire surrounded their Timothy Street home just west of the Ormond Beach Municipal Airport.

With no time to get out, a sheriff's helicopter landed in a neighbor's pasture and transported 15 people, two at a time, to the airport, Mihalik said.

"It was just unbelievable. In just a few minutes, there was fire all around us and we couldn't get out," she said. "We had to leave everything."

Frank and Payton celebrated their 50th and 13th birthdays at the shelter Thursday, although they still didn't know what had happened to their home. Regardless, Mihalik said she was glad to help.

"It was a joy helping. They needed it," she said. "It was a good group, a lot of teamwork."

Dozens of past and former Atlantic students, their parents and other volunteers arrived Wednesday night and Thursday morning with pillows, blankets, drinks, food and games for the evacuees.

Six ambulances from Daytona International Speedway lined up outside the high school Wednesday night, helping transport 25 residents from the Pine Castle Retirement Center at 1220 Jimmy Ann Drive in Daytona Beach.

Volunteers helped elderly residents inside on stretchers and wheelchairs. Some shuffled behind walkers in their bare feet while wearing bathrobes.

"You could see flames, big red and a lot of smoke," to the northwest of Pine Castle, said nursing director Nancy Fierro. "All my staff has come out to help."

Rita Romain-Fortner, a 67-year-old widow, fled from The Harbor Apartments on Bill France Boulevard with her kitten, Baby. Pets weren't allowed at the shelter so volunteer Johanna Riddle offered to let Romain-Fortner stay at her home in Port Orange.

"There are so many wonderful people around," said Romain-Fortner. "You really don't realize until something like this happens."

Valerie Gibbons, 73, sat in a wheelchair in the gymnasium Wednesday evening still wearing a special air-filter mask around her neck. She and her 76-year-old husband, Edgar, fled their home in Indigo Lakes near I-95 as thick brown smoke filled the sky. They packed up some jewelry and important papers before leaving.

"I don't worry about the house," Gibbons said with a slight smile. "I've already been through a husband dying and he's gone through a wife dying. We know what's important, he and I."

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July 5, 1998

Volunteer firefighters offer many helping hands

By ED WILKS
Staff Writer

When Edgewater volunteer firefighter Steve Negedly finishes fighting fires each night - sometimes as late as midnight - he has time for only a few hours of sleep before his day job starts at 6 a.m.

From 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., he runs a press at Independent Printing in Daytona Beach. From about 2:30 p.m. to - whenever, he fights brush fires.

Like hundreds of volunteer firefighters in Volusia and Flagler keeping similar schedules and making sacrifices to their jobs and families, Negedly, 25, is finding the pace unforgiving.

"Just trying to find time for sleep and rest" is the most difficult aspect of working what amounts to more than two full-time jobs, he said.

"I'm tired of it," Negedly said of the dual schedule.

He added, though, that the firefighting duty is a labor of love. "I just love doing it, serving the community and helping people."

Many of the volunteer firefighters are either working their regular jobs and fighting fires, or taking time off without pay from their jobs to focus all their energy on battling fires.

Harold Shinnick, 72, a volunteer firefighter with St. Johns Park in Flagler County, is self-employed as a sign painter. But because of firefighting duties the past month - he was on the front lines even before 20 homes burned June 6 in Seminole Woods - he has had to postpone nearly all his sign painting.

"It just has to wait. This is more important. We're trying to save our neighborhood," he said. "There's a lot of things more important than money."

Volunteer firefighters talk proudly about serving their communities - even though they make large personal sacrifices.

"I'm here for the duration," said Lisa Sekula, 32, a volunteer firefighter with Rima Ridge Fire and Rescue. "It's my community. We have to protect our homes. If I have to lose pay to do that, that's what I have to do."

If she weren't fighting brush fires, Sekula would be at her day job as a nurse in a doctor's office. When the fires started, she used some personal leave. Now, she's just taking time off without pay.

"My check was about \$400 short," she said.

It's not just financial sacrifices many volunteers make. Their family life also takes a hit.

Sekula and her husband, Randy, are both volunteer firefighters. They do see each other a few times each day - but not their 7- and 8-year-old daughters, who are staying with a friend.

"I've seen them about 2 1/2 hours in the last 13 days," Lisa said this past week. "It's not easy.

"Yesterday, they started crying. They don't understand," she said.

Like the Sekulas, firefighter Eddie Gregory, 23, has been away from his regular job. He works in the sporting goods department at the Wal-Mart SuperCenter in Ormond Beach. Fortunately, though, his employer is paying him - and several other Rima Ridge firefighters who work at Wal-Mart - even though they're now fighting fires full time.

"That was really a blessing," said Linda McIntyre, a member of the Rima Ridge department who is one of several people working at the fire station coordinating meals and other logistics. She and one of her sons, David, who's also a volunteer firefighter, work at Wal-Mart, as do Gregory and another Rima Ridge firefighter.

Shellie Lewis, 32, a volunteer firefighter with Edgewater Fire-Rescue, works from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Halifax Medical Center, where she is assistant education coordinator of the radiography program. After her workday at Halifax in Daytona Beach, she heads straight to Edgewater to fight fires.

"The hardest part of trying to do both is just being tired," she said. "I haven't been overwhelmed. Maybe I just don't need that much sleep."

Like other volunteer firefighters, she's able to keep the hectic pace because she knows she's helping protect her community.

"I wanted to do something for my own community and (this is) one way to do it," she said. "If (fires) were near my house, I would hope someone else would give up some of their time to help. That's how I stay motivated."

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Beach County, Florida Division of Forestry, military, State Fire Marshal's Office – about 50 people – were monitoring a fire when the wind shifted suddenly and caused the fire to literally explode. The huge crowning fire moved straight toward subdivision of about 50 homes. Firefighters between the fire and subdivision were faced with huge flames and high temperatures. But they weren't concerned for themselves. Their entire focus was concern for the families in these homes. As sparks flew onto the yards and roofs of the homes, the firefighters rushed to evacuate the families and protect the homes. Hand crews with hose lines fought the fire, which slowed it enough to give the bulldozer operators time to finish the fire break and the subdivision was saved.

On a humorous note, the County's Volunteers and Donations division sent out a request early on for donations of bandanas for firefighters to wear around their faces. Somehow that was translated in the media and other sources to bananas and we have received TRUCKLOADS. It is a continuing joke around Emergency Operations.

OFFICE OF CABINET AFFAIRS

 interoffice memorandum

TO: ☐ Kris M. Balderston
☐ David S. Beaubaire
☐ Jon P. Jennings
☐ Lisa J. Levin
☐ Thurgood Marshall, Jr.
☐ Anne McGuire
☐ Maya Seiden
☒ Laura Capps
☐ _____
☐ _____

FROM: Elisabeth Sarah Steele
(202) 456-7074

DATE: 7/7/98

☐ For your signature.
☐ For your information.
☒ Per your request.
☐ Please send to Scheduling.
☒ XXX Amencaps XX
☐ _____
☐ _____

Harris Wofford, CEO

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO: Thurgood Marshall, Kris Baldwin & Anne Mc Guire

LOCATION: Cabinet Affairs

FAX #: 456 - 6704

PHONE #: ~~606-5~~

FROM: Elaine Dalpiaz for Harris Wofford

FAX: (202) 208-4214 TELEPHONE #: (202) 606-5000, Ext. 459

COMMENTS:

Per your conversations with John

NUMBER OF PAGES (INCLUDING COVER SHEET) 3

IF THERE IS ANY PROBLEM WITH THIS TRANSMISSION, PLEASE CALL THE EXTENSION NOTED ABOVE.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Thurgood Marshall, Jr
Kris Balderston
Anne McGuire

FROM: John Gomperts 
Corporation for National Service

DATE: July 7, 1998

RE: AmeriCorps Members Assisting With Florida Fires

In response to your request, here is information about the activities of AmeriCorps members fighting forest fires in Florida. Currently, there are 77 AmeriCorps members serving with FEMA and the American Red Cross in Volusia and Flagler Counties and in Tallahassee.

After receiving a call for assistance from FEMA, AmeriCorps -- via the Florida Commission on National Service -- deployed two teams totaling 24 AmeriCorps members. In the days that followed, additional teams were requested and deployed. The majority of the AmeriCorps members are with the AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), a residential AmeriCorps program in which members live on campuses located on closed or down-sized military bases. The AmeriCorps*NCCC members serving in Florida are based in Denver, CO, Charleston, SC and Washington, DC. These AmeriCorps members are specially trained in fire fighting and disaster relief by either FEMA or the National Park Service. An additional team -- also trained in disaster relief -- was deployed from St. Louis, MO, where they serve year round in the St. Louis Safety Corps. (N.B. On the Martin Luther King Day of Service, the President served with members of the NCCC, Washington, D.C. campus).

As of today, the AmeriCorps members in Florida are containing the fires, conducting "mop up" activities, such as clearing away debris, and working at incident command posts on a variety of activities. Each morning, the teams are briefed and then given their assignments.

Because it is raining now in Florida, the roles of AmeriCorps members may be different on Thursday when the President visits. For the most up-to-date information, please call me or Lisa Bloch of the Corporation's Public Affairs office at 202/606-5000, ext. 140.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 7, 1998

CONTACT: Lisa Bloch
202-606-5000 x140

**AMERICORPS DISASTER RELIEF TEAMS CALLED IN TO
BATTLE FLORIDA FIRES**

Seven teams of AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) members have been called to Florida to help battle the blazes that have been ravaging the state.

The AmeriCorps teams, based in Charleston, S.C. Denver, C.O., and Washington, D.C., were called in by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). All 77 AmeriCorps members are highly skilled, experienced individuals who are certified in fire fighting by FEMA and the National Park Service.

The teams are now deployed in Volusia County, Flagler County and the Apalachicola National Forest near Tallahassee, where they are working closely with federal and state fire fighters to battle the blazes.

Recently, these AmeriCorps disaster response teams served in Florida and Alabama to help with tornado relief and in South Carolina and Tennessee to aid in flood relief. Across the country, AmeriCorps members have responded to disasters in more than 30 states since 1995.

The Corporation for National Service, which administers AmeriCorps, has a partnership with FEMA and the American Red Cross which enables AmeriCorps members to be deployed at moment's notice in times of disaster. The Florida Commission on Community Service worked to activate this agreement as soon as the call for help went out.

AmeriCorps, the domestic Peace Corps, was created in 1993 to improve the environment, enhance education, increase public safety, address unmet human needs, and provide disaster relief. AmeriCorps*NCCC is a residential program, with campuses located in Charleston, SC, Denver, San Diego, Perry Point, MD, and Washington, DC. In exchange for ten months of service, AmeriCorps members receive an education award of almost \$5,000, a living allowance and health care.

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July 5, 1998

Crews fight fire with fervor: Teams from all over battle the blazes

By DINAH VOYLES PULVER

Southwest Volusia Bureau Chief

DELAND - Hundreds of weary firefighters return to a command post at the Volusia County fairgrounds each night, their yellow flame-retardant shirts soaked in sweat and smeared with soil.

Nearly 1,000 in number, they are with state and federal agencies assisting Volusia County in battling the wildfires consuming Central Florida.

Red-eyed, smelling overwhelmingly of smoke, they troop to dinner. They stock up on eyewash, pain reliever and treatment for blisters on their heels and hands. They stand in line for a chance at a phone booth to call home. They look into each others eyes with a camaraderie only they understand.

They're wildland firefighters - an elite force trained to fight fire in the deepest of woods. They may spend up to six to eight months on the road each year responding where needed.

Some crews like the Negrito Hot Shots boast of their mission with vivid logos emblazoned on the sides and backs of a fleet of pea green trucks above the large white letters "Wildland fire fighters."

Others paint mocking names on their bulldozers like "Firewalker" and "Bad Boy." Some crews are low-key, trucks marked only with an emblem identifying them as state or federal forestry employees.

Many of the crews have colorful T-shirts, which are sold and traded as souvenirs after legendary wildfires. A Florida wildfires '98 shirt is in the works.

No matter where a wildland firefighter reports for work, an instant camaraderie is reached with strangers when they compare notes on where they've fought fires.

"In 1993 it was the Malibu fires in California," said Terry Zufelt of the U.S. Forest Service in Idaho. "In 1988 we were in Yellowstone. In 1996 Montana, and in 1994 it was everywhere."

The crews display experience, fearlessness and heroism day after day. They roar on bulldozers into the mouth of an inferno, plowing lines on its edge. They ride engines deep into the woods, spraying plumes of water into piles of blazing brush.

Or, like one grime-caked crew off Rodeo Acres Drive in Ormond Beach, they march single file into heavy palmetto scrub along the flank of the leading flames. Helmeted, most wore bandannas to soak up sweat in the searing heat and to protect their airways. Armed with pickaxes and shovels they hand-cut lines to starve the fire of fuel.

A frustrated voice heard over a radio Thursday afternoon on Rodeo described what the firefighters face. Billowing acrid smoke and dirt limited his vision. He could feel and hear the flames but that was it.

"I can't put a hose to it. I can't see it. I can't scout it," shouted the member of an engine

crew.

Safety instructions are repeated over and over at morning briefings. Firefighters carry heavy packs with radios, water, goggles and for the worst case scenario, heat resistant fire shelters they hope they never have to use.

In 57 days, Larry Benik will retire after fighting wildfires for more than 35 years.

He's been doing it since he was 18 years old. He's fought fires in just about every state west of the Mississippi, in Hawaii, and now in Florida.

Even he can't explain quite why they do what they do. "I think it might be something that's bred into you," Benik said. "Ever since I was a kid I knew I wanted to be a forest ranger and fight fires."

"It's been a great career. I don't regret it," said Benik, deputy incident commander at the DeLand command post.

He will leave in his place two sons, both firefighters with the U.S. Forest Service.

Benik anxiously awaited word on the Flagler fires on Friday night because one of his sons is a member of an engine strike team that worked to save structures in Palm Coast. His other son is on a fire out West.

"I always encouraged my boys not to do it," he said. "I guess it gets into your blood."

Wildland firefighters say they do what they do for two reasons: fun and money.

"It's exciting," said Mark Ulm with the U.S. Forest Service in the Tonto National Forest in Arizona. Ulm is a member of the Pleasant Valley Hot Shots, one of 60 hot shot crews in the nation that respond to critical emergencies.

Hot shot teams set back-burns and burnouts to clear fuel that could burn between the edge of the fire and the manmade fire line.

"Where else do you get to burn land and cut down trees and not get arrested?" quipped Ulm's fellow crewman, John Hunt.

Frank Ramsey, a firefighter with the U.S. Forest Service in the Nez Perce National Forest in Idaho, has always loved fire.

"Fighting wildfires isn't a bad way to make money," said Ramsey, a 19-year veteran.

Some do it for only for the season, six to eight months a year, earning as much as \$25,000 - \$30,000. Some put aside the money and live on it all year. Others work at other jobs or go to school.

"The money is good and it helps take care of my kids," said Myron Lambert, a member of the Spirit Lake Sioux nation in Fort Totten, N.D. Lambert is employed with the Bureau of Indian Affairs on his first-ever assignment

After a few days in the searing Florida scrub, does he regret his decision? "No way," he said. "It's exciting. It's an adrenaline rush."

No matter the fun and excitement, it's hot, hard and dangerous, Ramsey said. They often use humor to get by.

One guy came charging into a clearing with his engine this week then stopped short a

July 5, 1998

Volunteers prepare hundreds of meals daily for firefighters

By SANDRA FREDERICK
Staff Writer

ORMOND BEACH - When the alarm clock rang at 4 a.m. Saturday, Bill Casaletto knew what awaited him in the kitchen - enough flour and eggs to make 300 biscuits and sausage gravy.

The Ormond Beach resident co-directs the Red Cross feeding program at the River Bend Community Church on S.R. 40.

The church, which has 2,500 members, also has been designated as an emergency headquarters during firefighting efforts in the county.

But even it wasn't spared from the threat of fire. Most of the day Thursday, flames shot in the air just yards away from the walls of the building as volunteers made hot meals in the kitchen for emergency crews.

"We have been making about 500 meals three times a day for several weeks now," Casaletto said. "They (fireman) need enough strength and stamina to fight the fires."

The River Bend Community Church is one of only two kitchens the Red Cross has in place to feed emergency crews battling fires from the Putnam County line south to Brevard County.

The firefighters are getting much more than sandwiches, Casaletto said.

The homemade meals have included chicken cordon bleu, spaghetti and meatballs, roast beef, stuffed turkey and barbecue pork sandwiches.

Red Cross standards requires each meal to be balanced in the four food groups and have at least 3,000 to 4,000 calories to provide the firefighters proper nutrition.

"We feed the firefighters good," said Red Cross spokesman Bill England. "We normally give them a normal 6-ounce spoodle scoop and then double it. They need it to be able to keep fighting the fires."

The food is prepared each day by 30 or so volunteers and is delivered to the field by trucks.

Red Cross and local businesses are donating the food and the church is providing the volunteers to cook and package it.

Pastor Roy Hargrave is glad his parish can help the community in time of need.

"I don't know if we could ever have anticipated that this church would be in a position to help out like it is when we built it 16 months ago," he said. "Almost 50 percent of our own people have also been evacuated during the fires and they are still helping out. It's just amazing."

Church administrator Alden Stevens sees the stress that comes along with such disasters.

"It's not like a hurricane where you know it is coming and you can deal with what it leaves behind," he said. "This you just don't know which way it is going to go."

Volunteer Roger Holt, who has been helping out for the last week, would rather spend time in the kitchen than at home.

"It's for a good cause," he said as he flipped over the hamburger patties. "Besides, it's fun."

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THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

July 6, 1998 Monday, METRO

SECTION: A SECTION; Pg. A10

LENGTH: 492 words

HEADLINE: VOLUNTEER AID GETS CREATIVE;
PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES ARE HELPING BY LETTING MOVIE-GOING EVACUEES IN FREE,
CLEANING FIREFIGHTERS' GEAR AND MORE.

BYLINE: By Sherri M. Owens and Doris Bloodsworth of The Sentinel Staff

BODY:

With every nail, 12-year-old Bryan Jenkins on Sunday hammered away a little of the fear he felt when his family fled Palm Coast last week.

"It was scary," he said, sitting in the Lake Mary High School cafeteria, an activity center of sorts for those temporarily sheltered at the school. "You still have your worries, but this kind of stuff helps you forget about it."

Bryan and about 50 other children at the shelter spent the afternoon making wooden treasure boxes and screened bug houses in an on-site workshop by Home Depot.

The company was one of many helping those displaced by fires. Local businesses, residents and disaster-relief agencies helped get food and other items to sheltered families and to firefighters.

For those youngsters at the shelter not interested in woodworking, many other activities helped reduce the boredom of shelter life.

"We wanted to do something to help break up the monotony," said Jayna Fox, education coordinator for the Central Florida Zoo in Sanford. She and other zoo workers brought animals including a python, opossum, macaw, alligator, scorpion and tortoise, to the shelter for the children to see and touch. "This is our community. We wanted to entertain the children while educating them. We wanted to do what we could to help."

There were opportunities to get out of the shelter, too. The zoo let Flagler County families in free. Residents were allowed in at no cost to the Lake Mary YMCA for a swim. Yellow Cab Co./Mears Transportation turned off the meter for rides to the Lake Mary Cinema 10 and the Lake Mary Centre 8, where fire refugees could watch such movies as The X-Files and Dr. Dolittle at no charge.

Area churches made a plea from their pulpits on Sunday, taking special collections for fire victims and mobilizing their own relief efforts.

Southern Baptist Church funneled efforts to the disaster response team established by the Greater Orlando Baptist Association and the Florida Baptist Convention. Catholic Social Services has geared up, as well as the Central Florida Presbytery and the Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida.

Orlando Sentinel Tribune, July 6, 1998

Individuals did their part, too.

Belinda Laliberty and Diana Fishbeck, both of Lake Mary, have been cleaning the firefighters' smoky, singed gear. "You can't just throw these things in the washer and dryer," Fishbeck said of the heavy, insulated clothing. "It takes a lot of brushing and special stuff."

Boxes of diapers, cans of deodorant, bars of soap and bottles of water and Gatorade are stacking up at the shelter and filling rooms at the American Red Cross on Bumby Avenue in Orlando. Officials at the Red Cross and Salvation Army say it's too early to estimate how much money has come in.

Immediate needs at the Lake Mary shelter include prepaid telephone cards so evacuees can contact relatives. In addition, shelter workers say more food from restaurants will be needed if the Flagler evacuees are required to stay longer.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO: Relaxing touch. Therapist Pat Cryan massages John Capers of Daytona's Fire Department. BARBARA V. PEREZ/THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

COLUMN: Florida Fire Crisis: Day 42

Floria Ablaze

LOAD-DATE: July 6, 1998

July 6, 1998

At the edge of disaster, bastions of support tend to firefighters

News-Journal Wire Services

DELAND - Around every corner, behind every door and over every store counter, the stories just keep coming.

There's the woman originally from Maine who invited all Maine firefighters to stay with her. There's the firefighter from western Florida who, try as he might, wasn't permitted to pay for a pair of boots at Wal-Mart. There's the laundromat owner from nearby DeLeon Springs who offered to wash buckets full of sooty, sweaty socks.

And there's the free eye drops and sunblock, the free bottled water and Gatorade by the truckload, the free food cooked up in every possible pot, from residents' kitchens to DeLand's most popular restaurants.

"It's the only fire I've ever fought and gained weight," joked Jacob Wilkerson, a 29-year-old DeLand firefighter who has been attacking flames since Memorial Day.

DeLand, a town at the edge of disaster, might well adopt a Dalmatian as its mascot. In these jumbled, sweaty, smoky days, it has become a firefighters' community.

The town of 16,000 is about 30 miles north of Orlando and just beyond the area that the Florida wildfires have hit the hardest.

On the road, practically every third car is an emergency vehicle, some from as far as Canada, Colorado, California. Motels not jammed with evacuees from adjacent Flagler County are filled with firefighters, as are the dorms at Stetson University.

Signs - on store marquees and hand-stenciled on plywood, on towels, on bedsheets, on cardboard - are omnipresent. Most say thanks; some simply tell firefighters to hang in there. "We luv ya," says the Farm Bureau Insurance sign east of town. "Thank you for saving our home," said another, farther north.

It's understandable. DeLand has been choked for days by a haze of acrid smoke. Everyone realizes that if it's this bad here, it's far worse on the fire line.

"If it's difficult for us, then what are they facing?" said Carlos Esquivel, 18, who just graduated from DeLand High School. "They could die out there."

Similar sentiments are heard in other fire's-edge towns. In Ormond Beach, on the Atlantic Coast, Tim Curtis has turned his restaurant, Houligan's, into a veritable arcade for firefighters, offering emergency crews everything from massages to haircuts.

Here in DeLand, firefighters are astonished at the massive outpouring.

"I've never been to a place where their towns are burning down and they're worried about us," said Mike Caldaro, a firefighter from western Florida just back from a 23-hour workday.

He is one of 200 firefighters staying at Stetson University, which opened dormitories for firefighters. His colleague, Edward Osborne, fought fires so hot they melted his thermal

boots. When he went to Wal-Mart to buy more, the cashier handed back his money.

"She gave me my boots and she gave me a hug. I needed both," Osborne said.

One radio station has been sending in truckloads of bottled water and Gatorade to fire lines, where most of the 100 injured have been firefighters. Lip balm, Vaseline and sunscreen are also valued commodities.

Jack Fortes, a retiree ushering at the First Baptist Church of DeLand Sunday, sees the outpouring as a natural extension of community responsibility in a small town that was all but destroyed by a fire in the 1890s.

"When someone gets sick in your neighborhood, you take food to them," he said. "This is just that on a larger scale."

Behind him, retired businessman Brant Galloway gave the day's invocation. "We give thanks to those who bravely dash into the underbrush."

Mark Puhl, a firefighter from Nelsonville, Ohio, who arrived in DeLand with a relief crew Saturday night, got an early taste of the appreciation.

"Usually response like this comes through toward the end of a job," he said. "But we had people in the airport thanking us in advance."

His colleague, Lea Ann Parsley of Granville, Ohio, understood. The wildfires she typically fights are in sparsely populated areas out West.

"We're usually protecting timber," she said. "Here we're protecting people's homes. It hits home a lot more."

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July 4, 1998, Saturday, ALL EDITIONS

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 08A

LENGTH: 866 words

SERIES: Metro Final

HEADLINE: FLORIDA FIRES;
NASCAR fans crank engines, exit Daytona;
Racing in: Evacuees from Flagler take their place, but hoteliers are still
expecting to take a big financial hit as they give away rooms to families in
need.

BYLINE: Mike Williams;
Tom McCollister

DATELINE: Daytona Beach, Fla.

BODY:

It's supposed to be the biggest weekend of the summer, a four-day spending spree when hard-partying stock car racing fans jam this beach town's hotels, restaurants and gift shops.

Because of the Florida wildfire crisis that postponed the Pepsi 400, this July Fourth has turned into a disaster-tinged dud, so much so that hoteliers seemed almost grateful when an unexpected wave of would-be lodgers arrived --- evacuees from next-door Flagler County looking for shelter.

Thousands of cars streamed south into Volusia County, with many people stopping to rent the rooms just vacated by disappointed race fans.

But clearly, evacuees worried about their homes burning down weren't going to spend the kind of cash that revved-up racing fans would. And some hoteliers --- in a spirit of charity --- were giving reduced rates to evacuees, sometimes not even charging at all if the people were in tough financial shape.

"We're taking a big financial hit," said Sammy Mistry, who owns the Cardinal Motel. "But we had a plumber from Flagler come in last night at 3 a.m. with his five kids and his dog, and we couldn't turn him away. His house may have burned down."

Patrick Holley, who manages a Days Inn and the Tropical Seas motels here turned 30 of his rooms over to the local Economic Opportunity Council, which was helping find shelter for evacuees. He also sent food and drinking water out to the firefighters.

"We live here, too," said Holley, whose home was spared by the work of firefighters earlier in the week. "The fans will be back in October. They probably are the most loyal fans in all of sports."

The Atlanta Journal, July 4, 1998

At the Thunderbird Beach Motel, what looked to be a fully booked weekend evaporated Thursday morning when Daytona International Speedway officials canceled the race.

"It's a bust," said manager Judy Foster. "We had to drop our rates from \$ 150 a night with a three-night minimum to \$ 45 and \$ 55 a night. And last night I still only had 43 rooms full out of 97 available. A bunch of those were evacuees."

Many of Foster's race fan customers were rolling over their reservations to the Oct. 17 date when the Pepsi 400 has been rescheduled. Others, though, already had taken long-planned vacations and couldn't get more time off. Foster was refunding their deposits fully.

"I couldn't keep their money," she said. "That just wouldn't be right. You treat them right now and they'll treat you right later. They'll be back when all this smoke and ash clears . . ."

At The Corner, a T-shirt shop and body-piercing parlor, manager Chris Saliba said he figured the July Fourth weekend would mean at least \$ 5,000 a day in sales.

"I'm hoping we can do \$ 1,000 now," he said. "All that's coming in are locals. I'm not going to charge them high prices when they're living with this disaster."

Daytona Beach has suffered from smoke from the fires for much of the past two weeks. Often the beach is blanketed with thick smoke at daybreak, then clears for several hours at midday when the sea breeze kicks in, only to descend under the haze again at dusk.

Some hoteliers reported business dropping off a week ago. News reports about the fires were prompting some people with reservations to call ahead. Others arrived but checked out after one night once they found themselves gasping for breath on the beach.

Many merchants were counting on the busy holiday weekend to turn things around. Now they don't know when things will get better, especially since news coverage has made it seem like half the county is on fire.

Actually, about half the county is on fire, but so far, the flames have been contained in the western rural areas, away from the populated coast.

To many race fans who came here, then had to leave, the week has been a nightmare.

"I spent about \$ 2,000 on this weekend, went all out," said Dan Clark of Key Largo, Fla., who had set up camp on the speedway infield. "I bought an air conditioner, a generator and a golfing canopy to cover our eating area. Now, we can't even use them."

Hal Robinson has been coming to the Daytona races from Louisiana for 10 years. But he's almost certain he can't make it back for the Oct. 17 race. That's his wedding anniversary.

The Atlanta Journal, July 4, 1998

"My wife has put up with a lot the 19 years we've been married, but she told me today that if I wanted to be married 20 years, I better have a better plan," Robinson said, laughing. "I think she's got a cruise in mind."

Eddie Ben, a clerk at the Rusty Cat Gift Shop, said business has been off for several weeks.

"We're off about 70 percent," she said. "The store would normally be full, and now there's no one in here. It's been slow for the last two weeks. This weekend is supposed to be the real start of summer, and it just isn't happening."

For all the lost business, though, none of the merchants seemed critical of race officials for postponing the event. With fires burning in a long, smoky line across the western horizon, they agreed it was no time for a hard-partying crowd of 250,000 race fans to be coming to town.

"You don't bring a party to a town that's been devastated," Saliba, the T-shirt merchant, said. "That would just be a slap in the face."

GRAPHIC: Photo :

Hot spot: Firefighter Brenda Simmons from Myrtle Beach, S.C., takes a break while putting out a hot spot near Christmas, Fla., Friday. / DAVID J. PHILLIP / Associated Press (Home and Final editions)

Photo :

Below, smoke from wildfires shrouds the Winston Tower and the hospitality village at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach. Race officials have postponed today's running of the Pepsi 400 until mid-October. / CHRIS O'MEARA / Associated Press (Home and Final editions)

Photo :

A firefighter faces a wall of flaming trees Friday in Palm Coast, Fla., in a county where all residents have been evacuated. / CHRIS O'MEARA / Associated Press (Metro edition only)

LOAD-DATE: July 5, 1998

The Walt Disney Company

FAX COVER SHEET

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Transcript of 5:30 a.m. news, "6 This Morning", WKMG-TV (CBS), Orlando, FL

"Katie & Megan Hendren"

(Jacqueline London reporting)

..... you have to when something like this happens. A little girl was planning a trip to Disney World and she, with her sister, saved up nearly \$100 and were planning this big excursion. The little girl is only 8 years old and she was watching television and she heard about these brush fires and what the firefighters were going through and what they had to endure, and she decided to forego the trip to Disney World and she decided to give the money to the firefighters so they could buy water, food and Gatorade. And the firefighters said that it's things like that that get them through and helps them go back onto the front line.

So firefighters have put their hearts and souls into battling the flames and say that generosity from the community keeps them going.

V. of little girl in a fireman's red hat.

Case in point - 8-year-old Megan Hendren. The second-grader saved up her allowance and put it with her sister's. With that money they were going to go to Disney World, but when they heard about the fires, they decided to forego the trip and give that money to the firefighters.

Megan: "I wanted to give the money to the firemen."

Reporter: "Where were you going to go with your allowance?"

Megan: "To Disney."

Reporter: "Do you think you might?"

Megan: "Hmmm."

Reporter: "Why?"

Megan: "I thought this was more important than going to Disney."

JUL-8-98 WED 11:52

Reporter: "So what did you buy?"

Megan: Donuts, water and Gatorade."

Fireman: "So here's an 8-year-old who's probably dreamed forever of going to Disney and is willing to give up her money to help us and I think that says it all, right there. You know that really means more than anything right now than just about anything. That's what's really keeping us going.

V - Megan, again, with fireman's hat on walking.

Jacqueline: "And look at little Megan. She says she's happy to do it and will go to Disney some other time."

Theme parks thank firefighters for fire help

Sentinel**Tired of being
the last to know?****Sentinel
midday update**

Theme parks thank firefighters for fire help

By Tim Barker and Cory Lancaster
of The Sentinel Staff

Published in The Orlando Sentinel, July 8, 1998

Some of Central Florida's theme parks will offer free admission to thousands of Florida firefighters and their out-of-state colleagues who battled the recent wildfires.

On Tuesday, SeaWorld Orlando and sister park Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, both owned by Anheuser-Busch Cos., announced they would offer free one-year passes to firefighters.

Walt Disney World said Tuesday it will offer firefighters and their families free admission to all of its attractions -- including its four theme parks -- during August and September.

Universal Studio Escape officials say they, too, have plans to honor the firefighters and that more details will be forthcoming.

SeaWorld and Busch Gardens will offer passes to the state's estimated 30,000 professional and volunteer firefighters, along with several thousand firefighters from other states who have been on duty in Florida.

"All of us at SeaWorld are very appreciative of the firefighters and their incredible actions," said Vic Abbey, the park's general manager. "They protected the state's people and property, and we want to let them know how grateful we are."

To receive the pass, firefighters must show proof of their firefighter status along with a photo identification at either park's annual pass center by Sept. 30.

The passes normally sell for \$127.15, making the gift worth more than \$4 million if all eligible firefighters take advantage of the offer.

Disney's offer will provide unlimited admission to Walt Disney World's four theme parks, three water parks, Pleasure Island nightclub complex and

Theme parks thank firefighters for fire help

Discovery Island zoological park.

Walt Disney World President Al Weiss said the company, which offered similar gifts to soldiers after Operation Desert Storm, wanted to extend the free admission to family members.

"The families make sacrifices, as well as the firefighters," Weiss said.

Weiss said the details of the offer still must be worked out, but firefighters will hear more about the free passes from their fire agencies. The offer extends to all firefighters who battled the blazes.

It's not possible to determine the value of the offer because Disney does not sell an unlimited two-month pass. But a seven-day pass to the attractions sells for \$290.44 for adults.

Universal has been making donations toward firefighting efforts but on Tuesday hinted at more to come. Universal Studios has sent more than 27,000 bottles of water and sports beverages to the firefighters. And it encouraged construction contractors, who are building its second theme park, to lend heavy equipment, such as front-end loaders.

"These people deserve something very special, and we're considering many ideas right now," Universal spokesman Tom Schroder said.

Other corporations also have come forward with efforts to help fire victims. AT&T on Tuesday announced it will donate \$25,000 to the American Red Cross, and area PetSmart stores are collecting donations for animal rescue efforts.

[Posted 07/07/98 9:07 PM EST]

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Team puts firefighters' needs first

Sentinel

Tired of being the last to know? **midday update**

Team puts firefighters' needs first

By Richard Burnett and Melia Bowie
of The Sentinel Staff

Published in The Orlando Sentinel, July 5, 1998

Help came from everywhere Saturday, even the west Orange County swim, dive and water polo teams.

The Winter Garden children canceled their Fourth of July fund-raiser and instead donated 400 pounds of food.

"Things happen for a reason," said Laura Berry, mother of one of the team's co-captains. "When we found out we were without an event, that's what the kids decided to do."

The teams had been planning to raise money for a new diving board by setting up a concession stand at their holiday celebration. They ended up giving meat, buns and chips to Winter Garden firefighters, who distributed it to evacuees and firefighters at the Volusia County Fairgrounds on Saturday morning.

"We'll find another way to raise the money," Berry said. "We're fortunate not to be in the situation that those people out there are."

Beer turned to water as the community threw its support behind the firefighting effort.

Beer companies sent tractor-trailers packed with drinking water to the firefighters.

The joint effort, which began more than a week ago, has shipped almost 5,000 cases of water to Flagler, Volusia and Brevard counties.

Other notable efforts:

-- Donations to Orlando shelters were so numerous, workers had more than they could manage. All evacuees were moved into Lake Mary High School's shelter Saturday. The shelters at Lyman and University high schools were closed.

-- Retailers such as Publix, Winn-Dixie, Eckerd Drugs, Target, Wal-Mart and K mart have donated

Team puts firefighters' needs first

items from water to bedding.

-- Ranger Transportation of Orlando donated a tractor-trailer to Seminole County for collecting donations. Florida Rock Industries of Orlando donated five concrete trucks to load water for Orange County's firefighting effort.

[Posted 07/04/98 11:03 PM EST]

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Sentinel

Tired of being the last to know? **Sentinel midday update**

Kindness of strangers

Related stories

By Michael McLeod
of The Sentinel Staff

Full fire coverage

Published in The Orlando Sentinel, July 4, 1998

ORMOND BEACH -- Usually, this time of year, Houligan's does a good business. It's a sports bar, attracting a lively nighttime crowd that follows the play-by-play on a half-dozen television screens.

But for the past few nights, it has been a different scene. Every television is tuned to news broadcasts instead of sports. All the food and drinks are free. And half of the patrons are passed out under the pool tables.

Houligan's just isn't itself these days. But then, neither is Ormond Beach. In a city besieged by fire, Houligan's has become sort of an unofficial Engine Company No. 1.

When firefighters saved his home from the flames earlier this week, Tim Curtis, the bar's owner, volunteered to turn the establishment into a haven for firefighters.

Word leaked to the community. Soon firefighters weren't the only ones showing up at his door.

Cars and trucks started pulling up in the parking lot outside, as huge white flakes of ash drifted down from the sky.

A food supplier sent an 18-wheeler filled with hamburgers, hot dogs, bread and cereal for the firefighters. Pizzas turned up by the dozens. A homemaker brought in blueberry muffins. A pharmacy donated everything from eyedrops to pain medication. An 8-year-old boy turned up with a \$20 bill.

Many who brought donations of food and drink had been evacuated from their homes and had no idea whether the structures had been saved from the flames.

Galen King, a manager at a Best Western hotel, pulled up with \$29 worth of bottled water -- then offered to put up 20 firefighters for free.

Kindness of strangers

A man with a friendly, efficient bearing appeared and began greeting firefighters at the door and neatly stacking the bottled drinks that had been donated. It seemed as though he must be one of the tavern's managers. Later he introduced himself. His name was Cory Loomis. He was in Florida on vacation from Columbus, Ga., and just wanted to help.

Wednesday and Thursday, Curtis and several of the bar's employees stayed up all night to marshal all the donations into an ongoing buffet line for firefighters.

Outside, fire seemed to be everywhere, threatening everything.

One man who was battling flames in Volusia County heard his own house, in Flagler County, had been destroyed by a blaze.

Fire threatened a church complex being used as a firefighting headquarters.

"I like a good house fire," said Douglas Meyer, deputy chief of the city of Seminole's Fire-Rescue. "You go; you put it out. There's a beginning and an ending to it. This out here -- this just goes on forever. You know you're never done. There's too much dry fuel out there. No matter what you do it will come back at you."

Meyer's words turned out to be prophetic. He was hoping for a night's rest but soon his unit was called back out: Flames had kicked up again and jumped a road. All afternoon and into the night, embers fell on Hunters Ridge, a subdivision of 100 homes. Smoke was as thick as a fog bank, penetrated by eerie flashes as pine trees burst into flames.

Finally, at about 4 a.m., the Hunters Ridge fires were extinguished. No homes burned.

It's as close to closure as the seesaw battle ever gets, and the firefighters returned to Houligan's in good spirits. There's a station-house camaraderie as they elbow one another out of the way at the buffet line.

Most of the firefighters come from Florida, but some are from as far away as Idaho -- a group of four U.S. forest rangers, one of whom marveled: "Even green things burn here. Where I come from, green doesn't burn."

"Buddy, around here, we've got dirt that burns," said Lt. Richard Criswell of Seminole County Fire-Rescue. He sprawled in a Houligan's booth with his shoes off, a sooty hand clamped around a plastic foam coffee cup.

Kindness of strangers

Criswell has been a firefighter for 32 years. He has a rating scale for the disasters he has seen.

"When I worked on Hurricane Andrew, I figured it would be the No. 1 call of my career. Nothing could top it. Then I was on duty when the hurricanes hit last year. So nothing could top that. And now this comes along. And I gotta tell you, I have seen a lot of things, but I never thought I'd get a call: 'County on fire. Units please respond.'"

[Posted 07/03/98 9:36 PM EST]

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THE TAMPA TRIBUNE

7/7/98 - 10:05 PM

Firefighters showered with gifts*By DAVID PEDREIRA of The Tampa Tribune*

DAYTONA - *From socks to food, residents spare no effort to thank firefighters waging war on the stubborn Florida blazes.*

They sat down in a roomful of cool air, two scorched-looking men in sooty helmets and yellow suits - and became kings.

A caravan of servers descended on them with hamburgers, hot dogs, honeydew and cold drinks. Could they use a cold washcloth? Would they like some cookies?

It was almost too much for Dan Ziolkowski and Willie Cirone, two firefighters from the New Jersey Bureau of Forestry's Strike Team 2, who looked like they would be happier stepping on burning palmetto embers than being the center of attention.

"I've never seen hospitality like this in my life," Cirone said. "This would never happen in New Jersey."

It's happening all along the Atlantic coast of Florida. Firefighters used to working anonymous, sweaty jobs are sheepishly accepting the title of hero, and not knowing what to do with it.

In Brevard County, where 49 firefighters were injured in a desperate struggle to save homes ringed by fire, businesses from Wal-Mart to the local mom-and-pop restaurant showered tired rescue companies and cops with free food, clothes and gifts.

Some crews have eaten free at Outback Steak House. Others have been invited into homes.

Giant boxes full of shaving cream and toothpaste stand outside churches, with signs saying "Free for firefighters and police officers."

"They just can't do enough for you down here," said Peggy Miller, a firefighter with Maryland's Rockville Volunteer Fire Department.

Residents such as Tim Weaver of Ormond Beach can explain. Weaver returned to his subdivision this week to find scorched earth everywhere, and a perfect, whitewashed home in the middle. He's been dropping off donations for fire crews at a local command station ever since.

"They hosed down our house all night, and not even a garbage can melted," Weaver said of the firefighters. "I would do just about anything for them right now."

THE TAMPA TRIBUNE

Saturday July 4, 1998

300 firetrucks part at bar - but not to grab a beer

JIM SLOAN

of The Tampa Tribune

ORMOND BEACH - Forty-one states are represented on Florida's fire lines. And sooner or later, the workers stop off at a single sports bar.

They flew in from Minnesota, Idaho and California, or drove from Georgia, Tennessee and New York.

They came lugging piles of gear, or only the clothes on their back. One drove in for a family reunion and stayed to fight fires. Another came to make sure his elderly mom was OK, then stayed to make sure her town doesn't burn down.

But all the firefighters who are keeping Florida's fires at bay have one thing in common: Sooner or later, they end up at Houligan's.

That's the sports bar in Ormond Beach run by Walter Curtis and son, Tim, who closed the doors to paying customers three days ago to give firefighters a place to grab a soda and a clean pair of socks and soak up some air conditioning.

"The firefighters said they needed a place to give their people a break. I said, 'Whatever you want for as long as you want it,' " said the elder Curtis.

Curtis figured a few firefighters would drop by to wash up and sip a Coke. Since then, he's been serving up 3,000 meals a day, and sometimes has 300 fire engines parked outside his bar.

The tables at Houligan's are stacked with donated food. Piles of shirts, socks and underwear clog the aisles. At the front door, volunteers load coolers with box lunches and sodas for those headed back to the fire line.

At the health club next door, weary firefighters can take showers, or sack out on the floor in the aerobics room. Local telephone companies have even donated calling cards for out-of-state folks to call back home.

It's all part of what one federal fire official called the biggest relief effort in America in years.

"This is probably the biggest federal deployment [of manpower and equipment] since Yellowstone," said Mark Struble of the U.S. Forest Service.

The 1,900 fires burning in the state have sucked up nearly every bulldozer and flatbed truck in central Florida. National Guard troops have been brought in.

"We've got people from virtually every city and county in Florida," said Dan Kraemer of the Ormond Beach Fire Department, who dispatches men from a staging area at Houligan's. "We've got people who volunteered to come in off their vacations."

In fact, 41 states are represented on the fire lines.

"It would be easier to name the states that are not here than to name those that are," Struble said.

Phil Armacida and his brother, Gary, from the Yonkers Fire Department in New York, drove down to make sure his mother, who lives near Ormond Beach, was safe.

"Then I said, 'Well, Mom's OK, what can I do for these people?' " Phil Armacida said.

Both said they will stay until their mother, and the community, are safe.

Kelly Simmons, a firefighter from Chattanooga, Tenn., came to watch the race at Daytona, but stayed on to fight fires when it was canceled.

"We got tired of sitting on the beach watching everything burn," he said. "I know how to fight fires, so I'm here to help them out."

Cory Loomis of Columbus, Ga., came to town for a family reunion. He has no training in firefighting, so he volunteered to load coolers, stack food donations or do whatever else was needed.

"I knew it was bad, but I didn't know how bad it was," Loomis said of the fires. "I felt so bad for the folks here."

While his wife and relatives hit the beach, Loomis manhandled bags of ice into the back of a firefighter's pickup Friday.

"I'm just one little cog in the wheel," he said. "I'm just here to help out a little bit."

Jay Smith, a firefighter from Coats, N.C., has been on the fire line for nine days.

"I haven't seen anything even close to this," he said, shaking his head in amazement. "We can't even get back to get our clothes and stuff," he added, nodding toward the stacks of clothes in Houligan's aisles. "That's the first clothes we've seen."

Smith said his boss asked for two volunteers from his department. He raised his hand, but now he's not sure why.

"I didn't expect to come into something like this, to be honest with you," he said.

Twelve- to 15-hour shifts are not uncommon for these men and women, officials said. Chuck Sutnick of the Tampa Fire Department said a crew of 15 from Hillsborough County, Tampa and Seffner arrived at 9:30 p.m. Thursday and were put straight to work. By Friday afternoon, they hadn't slept yet.

"Ideally, it should be 12 hours on and 12 off, but it's not worked out like that for anybody," he said. "There's just too much fire."

He searched for words to describe the fires springing up everywhere.

"It's just popping up like popcorn," he said.

It takes a tough person to stand up to fires in 100-degree heat. But members of the "hotshot" teams are trained to do just that.

"They are the elite," Struble said of the 20-person teams from the U.S. Forest Service. "They get the hottest, dirtiest assignments. They are like the Green Berets in the Army."

Staging from the Volusia County Fairgrounds near DeLand, the hotshot crews hail from Los Angeles, Wyoming, Montana, New Mexico and elsewhere.

"They go from fire to fire," Struble said. "These guys don't do much mopping up - they are kind of the attack missile of firefighting."

They also don't spend much time back at the command post.

"They get cleaned up, crash, and get back up and do it again," he said. "I've seen these guys stay out with only short rest periods for 48 hours."

Despite all the federal, state and local manpower pouring into central Florida, Struble said, only Mother Nature can really put out the flames.

"The potential here is huge" for even more fires, he said, "unless we get some rain."

AI:

IT: (C) Jessie Kingensmith, 12, foreground, and brother Mark sleep soundly Friday at Titusville's Astronaut High School. They have been in the shelter since Wednesday. AP photo

IT: (C) Houligan's sports bar in Ormond Beach has locked the liquor cabinets and become an impromptu command post and home away from home for firefighters battling the blazes in Volusia County.

BOB CROSLIN/Tribune photo

IT: (C) Eileen and Graham Allen, above, load their belongings at a high school shelter after complying with an evacuation order that was issued Friday for all of coastal Flagler County. AP photo

IT: (C) At left, firefighter Gerald Santos checks on a wildfire burning in Palm Coast as part of the effort to contain the blaze between Daytona Beach and St. Augustine. AP photo

EH: BRUSH FIRE VOLUSIA FLA FIREFIGHTER USA REACTION ANECDOTE

FLORIDA ABLAZE

Volunteer aid gets creative

□ People and businesses are helping by letting movie-going evacuees in free, cleaning firefighters' gear and more.

By Sherri M. Owens
and Doris Bloodsworth

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

With every nail, 12-year-old Bryan Jenkins on Sunday hammered away a little of the fear he felt when his family fled Palm Coast last week.

"It was scary," he said, sitting in the Lake Mary High School cafeteria, an activity center of sorts for those temporarily sheltered at the school. "You still have your worries, but this kind of stuff helps you forget about it."

Bryan and about 60 other children at the shelter spent the afternoon making wooden treasure boxes and screened bug houses in an on-site workshop by Home Depot.

The company was one of many helping those displaced by fires. Local businesses, residents and disaster-relief agencies helped get food and other items to sheltered families and to firefighters.

For those youngsters at the shelter not interested in woodworking, many other activities helped reduce the boredom of shelter life.

"We wanted to do something to help break up the monotony," said Jayna Fox, education coordinator for the Central Florida Zoo in Sanford. She and other zoo workers brought animals including a python, opossum, macaw, alligator, scorpion and tortoise, to the shelter for the children to see and touch. "This is our community. We wanted to entertain the children while educating them. We wanted to do what could help."

There were opportunities to get out of the shelter, too. The zoo let Flagler County families in free. Residents were allowed in at no cost to the Lake Mary YMCA for a swim. Yellow Cab Co./Mears Transportation turned off the meter for rides to the Lake Mary Cinema 10 and the Lake Mary Centre 8, where fire refugees could watch such movies as *The X-Files* and *Dr. Dolittle* at no charge.

Area churches made a plea from their pulpits on Sunday, taking special collections for fire victims and mobilizing their own relief efforts.

Southern Baptist Church funneled efforts to the disaster response team established by the Greater Orlando Baptist Association and the Florida Baptist Convention. Catholic Social Services has geared up as well as the Central Florida Presbytery and the Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida.

Individuals did their part, too.

Belinda Laliberty and Diana Fishbeck, both of Lake Mary, have been cleaning the firefighters' smoky, singed gear. "You can't just throw these things in the washer and dryer," Fishbeck said of the heavy, insulated clothing. "It takes a lot of brushing and special stuff."

Boxes of diapers, cans of deodorant, bars of soap and bottles of water and Gatorade are stacking up at the shelter and filling rooms at the American Red Cross on Bumby Avenue in Orlando. Officials at the Red Cross and Salvation Army say it's too early to estimate how much money has come in.

Immediate needs at the Lake Mary shelter include prepaid telephone cards so evacuees can contact relatives. In addition, shelter workers say more food from restaurants will be needed if the Flagler evacuees are required to stay longer.

Mark Pinsky of the Sentinel staff contributed to this report.



BARBARA V. PEREZ/THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

Relaxing touch. Therapist Pal Cryan massages a child in the shelter. Cryan is a member of Daytona's Fire Department.

P.16/2214

FAX NO.

JUL 06 '98 03:07PM DISNEY GOVT REL DC

gathered to pray for rain and relief. Through a cottony white d, the of Jesus ed down into a pit of Na offering sal on. Jesus, the Rev. Roy Hargrove reminded worshipers, "reached down into the pit of our sins." Hargrove addressed the deep ques-

cepted in one of the h and Volusia County. The congregation opened the vice to the community, including h dreds of people staying in Daytona Beach hotels as they look refuge from the fires.

said. "The prayers of a few will be a blessing on the rity." As worshipers cheered, he lauded firefighters who battled fiercely to save homes, "their heels against the house." William Cochran of Eagle Rock Ranch in Flagler County credited a

erept week. "We an awesome, awes God," said after the vice. "God was there. God's hand was on each and every person who was there. You're standing for the faith of Christ."

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Jeni Taylor staff c

People aren't the only ones forced from homes



PHILAN M. EBENHACK/THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

Safe haven. Carmen Shaw cradles Smoky the raccoon and Blaze the fawn at her wildlife refuge in Bithlo.

□ The fires have wild animals on the move — and they may turn up in your back yard.

By Monica Scott

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

BITHLO — Flames will soon push hungry and thirsty wildlife into suburban neighborhoods and onto heavily traveled roads. "The wildlife animals that survived the fires are in hiding, but they will be on the move, looking for new sources of food and homes over the next few days," said Carmen Shaw, curator of the Back to Nature Wildlife Refuge in east Orange County. The animals are under severe stress, and some may carry diseases, such as rabies, that can threaten people, their pets and other wildlife, she said. People who find wildlife should call refuges, county animal control or state game officers. A Christmas couple did just that Saturday when they spotted a fawn with burned feet in their yard.

Where to call

Contact the Back to Nature Wildlife Refuge at (407) 568-5138, the Orlando Humane Society at (407) 351-7722, Orange County Animal Services at (407) 352-4395, or the Florida Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission at (352) 732-1225.

"This was the only brown thing in a field of black burned by the fires," Shaw said. Barely 4 days old with its umbilical cord still attached, the reddish-brown fawn called Blaze now rests in a blue playpen in Shaw's home. Just a foot from Blaze's pen is a baby raccoon firefighters rescued from the Geneva fires two weeks ago. The raccoon, fondly called Smoky, is suffering from smoke inhalation. Unfortunately, Shaw said, the fires came during the wildlife baby season. Despite the wildfires, state biologists said, there has not been a catastrophic number of wildlife deaths. The animals have adapted to life in a fire-prone environment.

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Sentinel

Tired of being
the last to know?Seeded
midday update

Community gives firefighters a day of rest, a day of thanks

By Purvette A. Bryant
of The Sentinel Staff

Published in The Orlando Sentinel, June 29, 1998

ORMOND BEACH -- For firefighters risking their lives in the battle against Volusia County's brush fires, Sunday was a day to give -- but mostly receive -- thanks.

Expressions of gratitude could be found in warm handshakes, colorful poster boards, marquees and plenty of smiles from people whose homes have been threatened by the blazes that have raged across the region in recent weeks.

Looking tired yet content, eight fire-rescue workers sat Sunday in the last two rows at Rima Ridge Baptist Church in Ormond Beach.

Several residents shook their hands and thanked them for helping save their community.

The church -- less than one mile from Plantation Pines and Hunter's Ridge, two subdivisions that have been threatened by the flames -- honored firefighters during a morning worship service.

"Lord, we thank you for the individuals that have been so courageous," prayed the Rev. Marcus Buckley. "We thank you for the example they've set for all of us ... Bless them greatly for all they've done this week."

Buckley, also senior chaplain for the Volusia County Sheriff's Office, presented his message, "Fighting Fire with Faith," based on Lamentations 3:22-23.

"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness," the verses read.

Buckley compared the passage to the faith a group of firefighters exemplified last week. While handing them food in heavily wooded areas near State Road 40, Buckley said firefighters told him how fire uncontrollably flared up trees and over their heads.

Some said they prayed and moments later, enough rain fell "so that they were able to hold that (fire) line," Buckley said.

Outside the church, Linda McIntyre, a worker for Rima Ridge Volunteer Fire and Rescue who attended the appreciation service, said her sons are helping to fight the flames.

"We just love all those guys who are doing so much to save our property and all the other properties in the neighborhood," McIntyre said.

Hollis Inglett Jr., also at the service, said he and other area residents wouldn't have survived without the firefighters.

"I don't think we can give them enough praise and appreciation," he said. "It's only a blessing that we haven't had tremendous winds. If we had tremendous winds right now, I don't know if they could stop it."

Troy McCoy, associate pastor at Calvary Assembly of God off S.R. 40, said members have been praying all week for the firefighters. The church provided food and shelter for evacuees and anyone else affected by the hot conditions.

"It's amazing how people come together in times of trouble," McCoy said. "It was unbelievable to see. Think about it. You've got thousands of acres burned, not one single home was burned. That's amazing. I believe God had to be involved."

Members at Riverbend Community Church in Ormond Beach also included firefighters in their prayers during the Sunday morning service. The Red Cross has distributed breakfast, lunch and dinner from the church's kitchen.

Bill Casaletto, co-food director at the church, diligently poured spaghetti sauce over a long pan of meatballs sitting in an open oven.

A former Navy cook, Casaletto said preparing food for hundreds of firefighters is right up his alley.

Serving the men and women is an honor Casaletto and other church members said they enjoy doing.

"We're coming in here and we're preparing sandwiches for several hundred firefighters," Casaletto said. "The trucks are coming in, they're loading up and they're going out to their destinations."

Thank you very much.



Thank you v ry much

Published in The Orlando Sentinel, July 8, 1998

Those words are not original nor adequate, but they are heartfelt.

Floridians owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to all who have come to the state's aid in the battle to quell the state's wildfires.

Florida's firefighters have demonstrated great tenacity in battling the wildfires since Memorial Day. But many of them clearly were becoming exhausted. They needed help -- more people and more equipment.

And that's what they got -- lots of help. Assistance came from the federal government and throughout the nation, including 44 states and Puerto Rico; from Canada; and even a special unit from Russia, which came to Florida to work with -- and learn from -- American "hot shot" firefighting teams.

All those firefighters have demonstrated a special courage rarely seen beyond the battlefield. The men and women on the "hot shot" teams faced down flames so intense that the temperature inside their protective clothing soared beyond 150 degrees.

And their bravery paid off. Although the fires consumed nearly 500,000 acres and, in some cases, flames struck near subdivisions, fewer than 200 homes were destroyed.

Because of that effort, homes in some areas survived even though fire blackened the woods around those structures.

Professional firefighters and emergency workers aren't the only ones deserving of thanks. Countless individuals and businesses put aside their daily concerns to pitch in.

Contractors have volunteered heavy equipment and operators to help clear brush and build firebreaks. Other companies provided cement-mixer trucks to help haul thousands of gallons of water to douse the flames.

Others dug into their pockets to pay for water, food and other supplies to help sustain firefighters and other emergency workers.

Churches, schools and businesses offered their buildings for use as staging areas for emergency

Thank you very much.

operations and barracks for firefighters to rest.

Few in Central Florida have been untouched by this crisis. Nearly everyone has inhaled the smoke from the fires. Many curtailed July Fourth festivities because of traffic concerns and the fireworks ban. All sacrifices -- both big and small -- are appreciated.

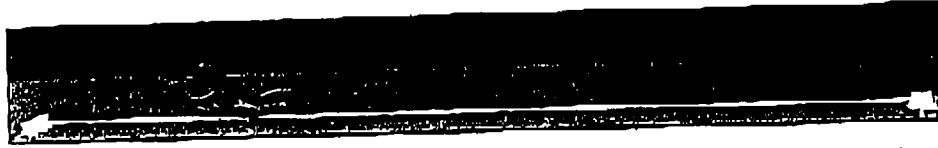
The battle is not over -- far from it. Firefighters still are battling flames. Though there has been some rain, it's not enough. Much of the brush and vegetation that has not burned remains dry and susceptible to the smallest spark.

Yet the ability to fight back remains strong because of the dedication of emergency workers and the generosity of caring people.

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Pat Robertson Sends Fire Supplies

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—Religious broadcaster Pat Robertson, whose comments about divine retribution and Central Florida provoked a small furor last month, is donating food, clothing and money to fire victims and firefighters.

On Tuesday, a truck from Robertson's Virginia-based Operation Blessing International delivered 40,000 pounds of food and the \$25,000 check to Orlando's Human Crisis Council.

Several weeks ago, another truck containing drinks and snacks for firefighters unloaded at the Flagler County Fairgrounds, said Lew Petzold of Operation Blessing.

A third truck is on the way. "We want to do whatever we can to assist these people," Petzold told The Orlando Sentinel.

A spokeswoman for Robertson said Tuesday that the donation was unrelated to Robertson's comments about Orlando.

The city was the scene last month of the annual Gay Days celebration, during which rainbow-striped flags flew from downtown utility poles. The event is sponsored by gay groups.

"I would warn Orlando that you're right in the way of some serious hurricanes, and I don't think I'd be waving those flags in God's face if I were you," Robertson said June 8 on "The 700 Club," his Christian Broadcasting Network talk show.

The greater Orlando area had some fires, but the worst of the fires and evacuations were just to the east and northeast, in Flagler and other counties along Florida's Atlantic coast.

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