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FIRE INVESTIGATION
ORIGIN & CAUSE REPORT

Aspen Acres Wildfire

CO-Highway 165 Mile Marker 17, Rye, Colorado 81069



Aspen Acres Fire looking north from Rye, Colorado (*20260630_155755*)

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1. INCIDENT SYNOPSIS

1.1 Aspen Acres Fire

On Monday, June 29, 2026, at 5:39 a.m. the Rye Volunteer Fire Department was dispatched and was the initial agency to respond to the Aspen Acres Wildland Fire located near the Aspen Acres Campground 16561 CO-165, Rye, Colorado 81069.

Steve Dennison, who lives at [redacted], recounted his observations on the morning of June 29, 2026. He described he was woken up to his lights flickering in his house and his generator turning on at 5:30 a.m. He stepped out of his residence to look around and could smell smoke. Mr. Dennison described he received a phone call from his neighbor Guy Richter, who lives at [redacted] (north of Mr. Dennison's property) who also stated he observed smoke originating south of the Aspen Acres Campground on the west side of CO-165.

Mr. Dennison stated after he ended the call with Mr. Richter, he immediately drove down to the area where they observed smoke to "size up the fire." When he arrived in the area of CO-165 and Custer Drive, he observed fire and smoke in the tree line along the powerlines. Mr. Dennison stated by the time he arrived at that location, the fire had already "spotted" to the east side of CO-165. Several 911 calls were placed by passersby. The first few initial 911 calls were not placed by Mr. Dennison or Mr. Richter.

1.2 Fire Overview

Fire Investigators from the Division of Fire Prevention and Control were requested by Division of Fire Prevention and Control Acting Incident Commander Joe LoBiondo, Wildland Fire

Management Section to conduct a fire investigation into the origin and cause of the fire named the Aspen Acres Fire. This report contains my analysis of Aspen Acres Fire that occurred on

Monday June 29, 2026. Using accepted principles of fire investigation[1], this analysis focuses primarily on the origin, cause, development, growth, subsequent damage of the overall fire.

2. SCOPE OF WORK

2.1 Objective

The objective of the investigative efforts associated with this report is to establish the origin and cause of the fire. This report is intended to document those investigative efforts and the origin[2] and cause[3] analysis and if the fire was intently set. Additional details may be available from the participating agencies and organizations involved in the investigation of this incident.

2.2 Civil/Criminal Responsibility

The assessment and identification of parties having possible civil and/or criminal responsibility, motive, and or liability for the fire incident is not beyond the scope of the analysis contained in this report.

2.3 Scene Processing & Methodology

A systematic approach is used during the scene investigation. Specifically, I conducted comparison examinations of areas of less damage to areas of greater damage with an emphasis on recognition, identification, and analysis of fire patterns, while evaluating the movement and intensity of the fire. The following data and information of significance were collected during this investigation.

[1] NFPA 921, (2024) Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2024 (Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association, January 10, 2023), 3.3.79 Fire Investigation. The process of determining the origin, cause, and development of a fire or explosion.
[2] NFPA 921, (2024) Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2024 (Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association, January 10, 2023), 3.3.144 Origin. The general location where a fire or explosion began. (See 3.3.153, Point of Origin, or 3.3.14, Area of Origin.)
[3] NFPA 921, (2024) Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2024 (Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association, January 10, 2023), 3.3.28 Cause. The circumstances, conditions, or agencies that brought about or resulted in the fire or explosion incident, damage to property, bodily injury, or loss of life.

The methodology and opinions expressed in this report rely primarily upon the 2025 edition of the Guide to Wildland Fire Origin and Cause Determination PMS 412 / NFES 1874, a publication of the National Wildfire[4] Coordinating Group. Additional documents referenced were the 2024 edition of the National Fire Protection Association's NFPA 921 – Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, which was by the Standards Council on December 21, 2023, with an effective date of January 10, 2023. The 2024 edition was also approved as an American National Standard on January 10, 2023, as well as the 2022 edition NFPA 1033: "Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigators".

The foundation of fire scene investigations is the use and application of relevant scientific principles and research, in conjunction with a systematic approach and examination of the scene. NFPA 921 identifies the systematic approach recommended is that of the scientific method; the systematic pursuit of knowledge involving the recognition and definition of a problem; the collection of data through observation and experimentation; analysis of the data; the formulation, evaluation and testing of a hypothesis[5]; and, where possible, the selection of a final hypothesis[6]. This method provides for the organizational and analytical process desirable and necessary in a successful fire investigation.

The basic concepts of the scientific method are simply to observe, hypothesize, test, and conclude. The scientific method is considered the best approach for conducting fire scene analysis and reconstruction.

4 NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2024 (Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association, January 10, 2023), 3.5.17 Wildfire. An event dealing with a fire in the wildland; originating from an unplanned ignition, such as lightning, volcanos, unauthorized and accidental human-caused fires, and prescribed fires that are declared wildfires.
5 NFPA 921. (2024). Chapter 4 section 4.3.5 Develop Hypotheses (Inductive Reasoning) (2024th ed., pp. 921-23-921–23). essay
6 NFPA 921 (2024) The concept of the working hypothesis is central to the framework of the scientific method. In fire scene reconstruction, the working hypothesis is based upon how an investigator describes or explains the fire's origin, cause, and subsequent development. DeHaan, John, and Icove, David. Forensic Fire Scene Reconstruction. 1st ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson / Prentice Hall, 2004.

The process of the scientific method continuously refines and explores a working hypothesis until arriving at a conclusion or opinion. An important concept in the application of the scientific method to fire scene investigation is that all fires should be approached without presumption.

Until data has been collected, no specific hypothesis can be reasonably formed or tested. All investigations of fire and explosion incidents should be approached by the investigator without presumption as to origin, ignition sequence, cause, fire spread, or responsibility for the incident until the use of scientific method has yielded testable hypotheses, which cannot be disproved by rigorous testing. Listed next is an annotated seven-step systematic process, based on NFPA 921, for applying the scientific method to fire investigation.

1. **Recognize the Need**. A paramount responsibility of first responders is to protect a scene until a full investigation can be started. The investigator should proceed to the scene as soon as possible and determine the resources needed to conduct the investigation.

2. **Define the Problem**. Devise a tentative investigation plan to preserve and protect the scene, determine the cause and nature of the loss, conduct a needs assessment, formulate and implement a strategic plan, and prepare a report. This step also includes determining who has the primary responsibility and authority to interview witnesses, protect evidence, and review preliminary findings and documents describing the loss.

3. **Collect Data**. Data "facts or information to be used as a basis for a discussion or decision" (ASTM 1989). Facts and information about the incident can be collected through direct observations, measurements, photography, evidence collection, testing, experimentation, historical case histories, and witness interviews. All collected data should be subject to verification. Data collection should include the documentation of the structure(s), vehicle(s), or wildlands involved; construction and occupancy; fuel loading; the processing and layering of the debris and evidence as found; examination of the fire patterns; char depths, calcination, weather, terrain, land use, and the application of electrical arc mapping surveys where relevant.

4. **Analyze the Data** (Inductive Reasoning). Using inductive reasoning, which involves formulating a conclusion based on a number of observations, analyze all the data collected. The investigator relies on his or her knowledge, training, and experience in evaluating the totality of the data. This subjective approach to the analysis may include knowledge of similar loss histories (observed or obtained from references) training, and understanding of fire dynamics, fire testing experience, and experimental data. Data evaluated can include the pattern of fire damage, heat and flame vectoring, arc mapping, and fire engineering and modeling analysis.

5. **Develop a Working Hypothesis**. A hypothesis is defined as "a supposition or conjecture put forward to account for certain facts and used as a basis for further investigation by which it may be proved or disproved" (ASTM 1989). Based on the data analysis, develop a tentative working hypothesis to explain the fire's origin, cause, and development that is consistent with on-scene observations, physical evidence, and testimony from witnesses.

6. **Test the working Hypothesis** (Deductive Reasoning). Using deductive reasoning, which involves a conclusion based on previously known facts, the investigator can compare the working hypothesis with all other known facts, the incidents of prior loss histories, relevant fire test data, published treatises, and experiments. Use the working hypothesis to eliminate all other reasonable origins and causes for the fire or explosion, recommend the collection and analysis of additional data, seek new information from witnesses, and develop or modify the working hypothesis.

   This step may involve reviewing the analysis with other investigators with relevant experience and training (technical review). Interactively repeat steps 4, 5, and 6 until there are no discrepancies with the working hypothesis. A critical feature of hypothesis testing is to create alternative hypotheses that also can be tested. If the alternatives are in opposition to the working hypothesis, their evaluation may reveal issues that need to be addressed. By testing all hypotheses rigorously against the data, those that cannot be conclusive should be considered as viable.

7. **Select Final Hypothesis** (Conclusion or Opinion). An opinion is defined as "a belief or judgment based upon facts and logic, but without absolute proof of its truth" (ASTM 1989). Only when the working hypothesis is thoroughly consistent with evidence and research can it become a final hypothesis and be authoritatively presented as a conclusion or opinion.

The concept of the working hypothesis is central within the framework of the scientific method. The investigator molds a working hypothesis and then can modify and refine it by drawing on and examining many sources of information, including past investigative experiences.

NFPA 921 currently suggests two levels of confidence, also known as Expressions of Certainty7, with respect to opinions. Two expressions8, a probable opinion, rank as a level of certainty corresponding to being more likely true than not. A possible opinion ranks at the level of certainty where the hypothesis can be demonstrated to be feasible but cannot be declared probable.

3. RECEIPT OF ASSIGNMENT

A fire investigation response was initiated after receiving a request from the acting Incident Commander Joe LoBiondo, of the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention, Wildland Fire Management Section. Division of Fire Prevention and Control Fire Investigator Curtis O'Leary responded to the incident on June 29, 2026. Investigator O'Leary was reassigned to the Gold Mountain fire, and I was assigned to the Aspen Acres Fire. I, Josh Dreher, responded to the scene on Tuesday, June 30, 2026. I spoke with United States Forest Service Law Enforcement Officer and Investigator Earl Huie, who was also at the scene on June 29, 2026. I was provided with verbal overview of information and documentation related to the request. The information included contact and background information related to the overall scene and possible interested parties.

Additional documentation was obtained at the Command Post, located at Rye High School. There are no injuries or loss of life at the current state of the fire. As the fire is an ongoing event, at the time the report was authored, there is not a precise description of damaged or destroyed structures at this time. I conducted the origin and cause investigation as the primary investigator, while United States Forest Officer and Investigator Earl Huie led interviews with

7 NFPA. 921 (2024). Chapter 4 section 4.5.1 Expressions of Certainty. Somone may express an opinion of a higher or lower level of certainty. The expression is determined by the investigator's confidence int the data, in analysis of that data, and testing of the hypothesis formed. In National Fire Protection Association (2024th ed., pp. 921-23-921–23).
8 NFPA. 921 (2024). Chapter 4 section 4.5.1.1 (1) Probable. The expression corresponds to the being more likely true than not. (2024th ed., pp. 921-23-921–23). Chapter 4 section 4.5.1.1 (2) The hypothesis may be demonstrated to the feasible but cannot be either ruled out or declared probable. If two or more hypotheses are equally likely the expression must be "possible."

the fire crews and individuals associated with the fire event and assisted with the origin and cause investigation.

4. SAFETY ASSESSMENT

Investigator Earl Huie were able to verify the subject area on CO-Highway 165 was safe to enter, however, to be vigilant as the fire conditions were described to be radical and unpredictable at times. After an assessment of the active fire scene dangers related to fire activity in the immediate areas were evaluated, and the hazards were present. Wildland personal protective equipment to include a fire shelter were deemed appropriate for the investigation.

5. PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO

5.1 Photography

During the origin and cause examination, digital photographs were taken to document the investigation and findings. The photographs taken are a true and accurate representation of the relevant facts gathered throughout the investigation. Investigator Huie and I were responsible for photography and documentation.

5.2 Video

A short video was provided by Mr. Richter. It was taken at the end of Silvercliffe Drive by Mr. Richter's friend "Turtle, "on his cell phone. The video shows fire in the trees to the northeast of Silvercliffe Drive. No additional video footage was made available or could be located.

6. THE FIRE INCIDENT

The subject "Aspen Acres" fire burned in both Pueblo and Custer Counties. The fire originated in Custer County Colorado. The general origin area for the Aspen Acres Fire is approximately 200 feet west of CO-Highway 165 at mile marker 17 and southwest of the intersection of CO-Highway 165 and Custer Drive. Located in the general area of origin is a series of utility poles that carry power along conductors at the top of the pole. The specific origin area is located along the utility pole powerlines located approximately 175-200 feet west of CO-165 at about mile marker 17, southwest from CO-165 and Custer Drive. (38°00'28.9" N / 105°04'00.7" W). The onset of the Aspen Acres wildfire was witnessed by Mr. Richter at 5:45 a.m. on June 29, 2026, from his porch located on the south side of his residence. Immediately following the start of the fire, flames primarily spread west up the hill and south. As the fire progressed, the flame front moved east and north from the general area of origin. The advancing fire moved east crossing CO-165 and west, northwest.



Picture taken by Guy Richter from his residence on Davis Drive, morning of June 29, 2026



Picture taken by Guy Richter from CO-165 and Custer Drive, morning of June 29, 2026

7. INTERVIEWS

7.1 Steve Dennison

1. I met with Steve Dennison at his residence on Wednesday, July 1, 2026, at 12:00 p.m.
2. He woke up at 5:30 a.m. to his lights flickering on and off.
3. A short time later, the power went off and he heard his generator start up.
4. He exited his residence to look around and smelled smoke.
5. He stated his neighbor Guy Richter called him, who lives north of his residence, and said he saw smoke and fire south of their location, south of Aspen Acres Campground.
6. He went to the location to "size up the fire". He believes this was around 5:50 a.m.

7. When he got to the location, CO-165 and Custer Drive, he observed smoke and fire in the tree line along the powerlines.

8. He described the fire was primarily in that area at that time.

9. While he was there, several other residents showed up.

10. While he was at that location, the fire was spotted from the west side of CO-165 to the east side of CO-165.

11. He stated Guy Richter had sent him two photographs of the initial fire.

7.2 Guy Richter

1. Mr. Richter had sent an additional photograph he received from a friend who lived off Silvercliffe Drive showing an aspen tree leaning against electrical conductors. He said a friend of his, "Turtle" took the picture on June 29, 2026, at 7:20 a.m.

2. On July 15, 2026, I met with Mr. Richter. I asked him to accompany Investigator Earl Huie and I, to show us the location where the photograph that "Turtle" had taken was located.

3. Mr. Richter described the location as the "very end of Silvercliffe Drive."

4. Mr. Richter led us to the location where the photograph was taken, 114 Silvercliffe Drive.

5. On arrival at the location, there were several San Isabel Electric Association vehicles parked in the area.

6. Electrical conductors on top of power poles were located in the area.

7. Referencing the photographs provided to Guy from "Turtle," we located the power poles.

8. From the photograph provided by Mr. Richter, we lined it up with the powerline easement looking south and agreed the picture was taken from that location.

9. I asked Mr. Richter in reference to the original two photographs he took, where they were taken. He stated the photo looking south along CO-165 was taken from his porch on the south side of his residence, showing a smoke plume on the west side of CO-165 south of Aspen Acres Campground. The second photo was taken from the intersection of CO-165 and Custer Drive, showing fire and smoke in the tree line along the powerlines.

10. Mr. Richter stated when his lights were flickering and then his generator turned on, he thought it had to be the powerlines as had happened before. He said he experienced power going out previously because of trees falling into powerlines, although he could not provide times.

11. Mr. Richter said he called his neighbor Steve Dennison and told him he saw a fire south of their residences along CO-165.

8. WEATHER INFORMATION

Source of information: OpenWeather
Date and time of data collection: 06/29/2026 at 05:30 hours
Temperature: 58.59 °F
Humidity: 34%
Wind direction: SW at 228°
Wind speed: 8.21 mph
Skies: clear sky

9. SCENE EXAM

During the June 30, 2026, and July 1, 2026, scene[9] examinations, the scene was documented with digital photographs depicting the landscape and the surrounding area's condition. A select number of photographs are referenced throughout this report. An estimated number of

[9] NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2024 (Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association, January 10, 2023), 3.3.170 Scene. The general physical location of a fire or explosion incident (geographic area, structure or portion of a structure, vehicle, vessel, piece of equipment, etc.) is designated as important to the investigation because it may contain physical damage or debris, evidence, victims, or incident-related hazards.

residential or outbuilding structures total 325 were damaged or destroyed as a result of the subject fire.

9.1 CO-165 Scene

The named Aspen Acres fire started on the west side of CO-165 at the base of a hill, along the utility pole lines that parallel CO-165. An aspen tree had been blown over by the wind and uprooted at the base and fallen on overhead energized powerlines. The stretching force resulted in the powerlines being located approximately three feet from the ground.

The fuel package at the general origin area[10] for Aspen Acres Fire consists of an area that was estimated at one acre. The area was covered with grass, brush, trees, and various forms of vegetation.



General area of origin (JMD_4222)

10 NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2024 (Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association, January 10, 2023), 3.5.9 General Origin Area. The larger area where the fire first established itself and is identified by an analysis of the fire behavior context, macroscale fire pattern indicators, and witness statements.

A grid search was performed at the general area of origin. Mr. Richter and Mr. Dennison provided eyewitness accounts of what they observed in addition to several photographs. Their account of the events was supported by evidence observed during the course of the investigation. Mr. Richter and Mr. Dennison reported fire and smoke, which they observed from their residences, and when they arrived at the location of CO-165 and Custer Drive, fire and smoke was seen in the tree line along the powerlines. Fire effects, fire patterns, and an aspen tree resting on conductors, indicated the fire originated in this area.

The specific origin area[11] was located at a point where the section of aspen tree had contacted the conductors, stretching the conductors to approximately three feet above the ground. The aspen tree trunk was in contact with both the hot and neutral conductor. The aspen tree had mass loss to the bark with charring and burn marks where the tree was in contact with the conductors. The conductors had arcing, melting and charring.

11 NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2024 (Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association, January 10, 2023), 3.5.14 Specific Origin Area. The smaller area within the general origin area where the fire's direction of spread was first influenced by fuel, weather, or topography.



Specific origin area (JMD_4236)



Melting of conductors (JMD_4251)



Arcing on conductors (JMD_4254)

Macro and micro fire indicators were observed in the form of protected areas under rocks, sticks and other natural debris. Grass stems, angles of char and burning were observed on trees brush, foliage and bushes, in addition to sooting and staining of several surfaces.

The observed patterns were assessed and consistent with fire moving west up the hill in the early stages of fire development. As the fire developed, the advancing fire patterns and indicators displayed fire advancing from the general origin area and spread west and south varying degrees of terrain.

The fire resulted in low intensity burning around the specific origin area where the fire movement is close to the ground and not generating sufficient heat to involve all the fuel package items in the area. The fuel package included lightweight fuels, grasses, pine needles and ground foliage. Areas of higher intensity burning outside the specific origin area displayed more concentrated and complete burning of the involved fuels available. This area

contained lightweight fuels, such as grasses, pine needles, ground foliage, aspen trees, pine trees, and downed trees. This, coupled with elevated wind speed, topography and the fuel package, allowed the fire to grow in size and intensity.

9.2 Silvercliffe Scene

The Silvercliffe Drive area was evaluated. This area was located next to 114 Silvercliffe Drive, Rye, Colorado 81069. On arrival on Wednesday, July 15, 2026, several San Isabel Electric Association vehicles were parked in the area. Mr. Richter sent me a photograph that was taken by his friend, "Turtle,". Once I confirmed the location, Investigator Huie and I evaluated the Silvercliffe Drive area. The overhead electrical conductors had been cut and removed from the scene along with the downed aspen tree that had been leaning on the conductors as seen in the photograph.

I evaluated the movement, intensity, fire pattern indicators on the surrounding trees that presented with charring at the base. I observed the absence of consumed fuels related to grasses, pine needles, ground foliage, aspen and pine trees. Additionally, this is supported by an eyewitness account during the fire and is reinforced by photography provided by Mr. Richter. The combined overall fire patterns, and eyewitness account do not support the Silvercliffe area as a location where fire originated.

I spoke to one of the San Isabel Electrical Association employees on scene. This employee stated he was a foreman for the crew but declined to provide me his name. He provided a name of Kevin Schlieh, the operations supervisor of the San Isabel Electric crew that removed the aspen tree and conductors from the scene. He said if we had any questions, we needed to speak with him. I asked him where the conductors and the aspen tree were located. He said a group of lawyers and investigators were on scene the week before and removed the conductors and aspen tree. He was unsure where they were taken to.



Photograph provide by Guy Richter, taken by "Turtle." From Silvercliffe Drive

10. ORIGIN DETERMINATION

10.1 General Origin Area CO-Highway 165

The general origin area for the Aspen Acres Fire is approximately 200 feet west of CO-Highway 165 at mile marker 17 and southwest of the intersection of CO-Highway 165 and Custer Drive. (38°00'29.52" N / 105°03'59.88" W)



General area of origin (JMD_4214)

10.2 Specific Origin Area[12]

12 NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2024 (Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association, January 10, 2023), 3.5.14 Specific Origin Area. The smaller area within the general origin area where the fire's direction of spread was first influenced by fuel, weather, or topography.

The specific origin area is where the fallen tree contacted the overhead energized conductors. The subject conductors extend parallel to CO-Highway 165. (38°00'28.9" N / 105°04'00.7" W)



Specific area of origin (JMD_4233)

10.3 First Fuel / Subsequent Fuels

The first fuel[13] is identified as dry grass and vegetation, additional fuels included groundcover fuel consisting of grasses, pine needles, ground foliage, aspen trees, pine trees, and downed trees.

13 NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2024 (Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association, January 10, 2023), 3.3.98 Fuel. A material that will maintain combustion under specified environmental conditions. [53, 2021]

10.4 Ignition Scenario

During a wind event, an aspen tree had fallen and contacted energized conductors. The energized conductors provided sufficient heat energy to elevate the tree bark and nearby vegetation to a point that would support combustion. Melted aluminum was observed under the area where the conductor contacted the tree presented with melting. The melted aluminum dripping from the conductor should also be considered as contributing to the ignition of the fire. The ignition scenario is coupled with contributing elements associated with the falling of the tree during high winds. A wind verification report was generated as an addendum and is attached to this report.

10.5 Layering Process

A layering process was conducted within the general origin area of the scene and the subsequent area of interest. At the CO-Highway 165 general origin area, the power line/conductor was still in place. A layering process was not conducted at the Silvercliffe Drive scene, the conductors and aspen tree were no longer present.

11. INVESTIGATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

The compilation of factual data, as well as an analysis of those facts, should be accomplished objectively and truthfully. The basic methodology of any fire investigation relies on a systematic approach and attention to all relevant details. A systematic approach often will uncover new factual data for analysis, which may require previous conclusions to be reevaluated. With few exceptions, the proper methodology for a fire, wildfire or explosion investigation is first to determine and establish the area of origin and then investigate the cause: circumstances, conditions, or agencies that brought the ignition source, fuel, and

oxidant together. Several hypotheses evolved during the investigation that addressed events that may have occurred outdoors to explain the fire.

1. Lightning
2. Discarded Smoking Material
3. Incendiary (*Intentionally set fire*)
4. Electrical / Utility Lines

11.1 Lighting

On June 29, 2026, the wind was recorded on June 28, 2026, to be between 44 and 45 mph and on June 29, 2026, at 6:00 a.m. was to be between 50 and 52 mph. The wind speed at 6:00 a.m. was reported at 50 mph, fair, windy and the skies were clear. The wind was a contributing factor in the rapid spread of the fire. There were not any thunderstorms reported on the day of the fire. No physical evidence of a lightning strike was observed, nor were there any reports of lightning in the area. A STRIKEnet® report for the Aspen Acres Fire was generated (Report#4158211). A five-mile radius search was evaluated beginning June 28, 2026, through June 30, 2026. The report verified there were zero cloud-to-ground lightning strokes detected within five miles of the provided coordinate. Therefore, a lightning strike was eliminated as the cause. These reports are added as an addendum to the end of this report.

11.2 Discarded Smoking Material

Smoking activities and/or discarded smoking materials, including matches, cigarettes, cigars and pipes were considered as a possible competent ignition source. I visually searched the general origin area for evidence of the smoking material. No smoking materials were present in the general origin area. Given the fuel bed and configuration, temperature, humidity and

overall time, a fire associated with smoking material would be inconsistent and not viable given the data collected during this investigation. As a result, it can be eliminated as a viable ignition scenario and cause of the fire.

11.3 Incendiary (Intentionally set fire)

An open flame as a competent ignition source can be excluded as a cause of this fire. Examples of an open flame include candles, matches, lighters, pilot lights, and oil lamps. Standing pilot lights existed within the natural gas water heater and boiler, however this fire did not originate in or near a structure and therefore can be eliminated as a cause.

11.4 Electrical / Powerlines

The ignition of fire, caused by arcing and/or sparks from a short circuit of conductors, may occur due to high winds, contact with vegetation, equipment failure, or human or animal contact. Sometimes several of these factors may work to cause a fire, such as wind blowing vegetation into contact with the electrical equipment. Fires from energized overhead conductors, also known as powerlines, can start as a result of conductor contact with standing vegetation due to low clearances or with wildland fuels on the ground when electrical equipment, such as a conductor, falls to the ground and comes into contact with dry fuels.

Sparks or melted metal from conductors or transformers can fall to the ground and ignite fires. These fires may occur in remote areas where fire suppression access is limited, that may fire suppression efforts. An analysis of the overall fire patterns displayed fire originating in a single location under the section of an aspen tree and where the arcing and/or sparks from conductors, the burning of combustible materials such as tree bark or the wood itself and coming in contact with items such as trees or vegetation. Fire pattern indicators displayed a

low intensity fire spreading out in a circular pattern from the ignition site and then moving laterally north and south, backing to the east and advancing to the west as the fire grew in intensity. (38°00'28.9" N / 105°04'00.7" W)

12. FIRE CAUSE CONCLUSION

The results of the investigation conducted by the Division of Fire Prevention and Control, Fire Investigations Branch and the United States Forest Service indicate the following:

- The general origin area for the Aspen Acre Fire is approximately 200 feet west of CO-Highway 165 at mile marker 17 and southwest of the intersection of CO-Highway 165 and Custer Drive. (38°00'29.52" N / 105°03'59.88" W)

- The specific origin area for the Aspen Acre fire is an aspen tree contacting conductors and underneath it, along the powerlines running through the trees, parallel to CO-Highway 165. (38°00'28.9" N / 105°04'00.7" W)

- Lightning, Discarded Smoking Material, Incendiary were eliminated as an ignition source.

- High winds were a contributing factor.

- A tree had broken free and contacted energized powerlines that resulted in a fire.

13. PARTICIPATING INVESTIGATORS

Primary and Lead: Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control Fire Investigator Josh Dreher

Secondary: United States Forest Service Officer and Investigator Earl Huie

14. LAB EXAMS

The conductors and Aspen trees from both scenes, CO-Highway 165 and Silvercliffe Drive had been removed by private fire investigators from Iris Investigations and Golden Forensics and retained law firms for both the San Isabel Electric Association and private individuals. The law firms are Waddell/Serafino out of Texas and Cozen O'Connor out of Denver.

The conductors were transported by these parties to Kilgore Engineering in Englewood, Colorado and the Aspen trees were transported to Golden Forensics in Centennial, Colorado. A joint lab exam was scheduled for Monday, July 27, 2026, for all interested fire investigators and representatives for the law firms.

On Monday, July 27, 2026, the lab exam for the conductors was held at Kilgore Engineering and started at 8:00 a.m. The Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control retained Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives Electrical and Mechanical Engineer Cameron Novak to assist with the lab exams. At the exam, I took photographs of the conductors, while Engineer Novak completed an exam of the conductors. This concluded the lab exam at Kilgore Engineering.

On July 27, 2026, the lab exam for the Aspen trees was held at Golden Forensics and started around 1:00 p.m. I took photographs of the Aspen trees, while Engineer Novak completed an exam of the Aspen Trees. This concluded the lab exam at Golden Forensics.

Please refer to Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives Engineer Novak's report for further information.

15. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This report has been reviewed for conformance with accepted and tested scene processing methodology. Additionally, it has been reviewed for both form and content and agreed with

or exceed the recommendations of published materials and standards relating to the reporting of scientific information outlined in publications such as those published by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). Based on a reasonable degree of fire investigative certainty, the data contained in this report is true and accurate based on the information available at the time it was written.

Findings, opinions, and conclusions may change if additional data collected is discovered after this report was authored. Should additional data become available after this report was generated, the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control reserves the right to evaluate new information and adjust stated opinions as needed or dictated by industry standards and guidelines such as Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards.

Respectfully,



Josh Dreher
Fire Investigator
IAAI-FIT, NAFI-CFEI, IAAI-ECT, NWCG-FI-210
COLORADO
Division of Fire
Prevention & Control
Department of Public Safety
C (720) 916-0650 | DISPATCH: (719) 544-2424
1697 Cole Blvd, Unit 200 Lakewood, CO 80401
josh.dreher@state.co.us

Appendix A – Documents, Information and Data

1. Weather report, Weather Underground, for Monday, June 29, 2026.
2. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigation, 2024 edition.
3. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA 1033, 1033, Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigations, 2022 Edition.
4. Guide to Wildland Fire Origin and Cause Determination PMS 412 / NFES 1874, a publication of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) 2025 Edition.
5. STRIKEnet® Report, #41582181, for Latitude 38.008018, Longitude -105.066862
6. Wind Verification Report for Latitude 38.008018, Longitude -105.066862

Security Response Services
1717 East Interstate Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58501-0564
Phone: (701) 557-5396
Phone: (800) 259-2659
FAX: (701) 557-5378

SECURITY and RESPONSE SERVICES
SRS Related Ticket

Created for: San Isabel Electric Association
Created on: 7/29/2026 at 9:18:20AM

Reporting Period 06/28/2026 12:00 AM To 06/29/2026 12:00 PM

Substation: 3 **Circut/Feeder:** 211 **Phase/Switch:** B **Time Reported:** 06/29/2026 05:27:37
Name: [redacted] **Account Number:** 2551900
Critical Handling: **Meter Nbr:** 20020104
City/State: SAN ISABEL, CO **Location:** L11 B2 TARA J
Home Phone: [redacted] **Call Back Phone:** [redacted] **Section:** 23692636
Power Status: Power Out **Cust OCR:**
Call Back Status: **Call Back Requested:**
Service Desc: L11 B2 TARA J **Crew Area:** PUEBLO WEST
911 Address: 71 JC RD **OMS Outage ID:** 783519
Multi-Meter Desc:

Comments:

No Comments Found

Security Response Services
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Bismarck, ND 58501-0564
Phone: (701) 557-5396
Phone: (800) 259-2659
FAX: (701) 557-5378

SECURITY and RESPONSE SERVICES
SRS Related Ticket

Created for: San Isabel Electric Association
Created on: 7/29/2026 at 9:18:20AM

Reporting Period 06/28/2026 12:00 AM To 06/29/2026 12:00 PM

Substation: 3 **Circut/Feeder:** 211 **Phase/Switch:** B **Time Reported:** 06/29/2026 05:41:38
Name: [redacted] **Account Number:** 631700
Critical Handling: **Meter Nbr:** 20019505
City/State: SAN ISABEL, CO **Location:** E04 AAC 3601
Home Phone: [redacted] **Call Back Phone:** [redacted] **Section:** 236936010073
Power Status: Power Out **Cust OCR:**
Call Back Status: **Call Back Requested:**
Service Desc: E04 AAC 3601 **Crew Area:** PUEBLO WEST
911 Address: 145 SAINT CHARLES D **OMS Outage ID:** 783519
Multi-Meter Desc:
Comments:
No Comments Found

Substation: 3 **Circut/Feeder:** 211 **Phase/Switch:** B **Time Reported:** 06/29/2026 05:41:38
Name: [redacted] **Account Number:** 632201
Critical Handling: **Meter Nbr:** 60611238
City/State: SAN ISABEL, CO **Location:** E04 AAC 3603
Home Phone: [redacted] **Call Back Phone:** [redacted] **Section:** 236936030048
Power Status: Power Out **Cust OCR:**
Call Back Status: **Call Back Requested:**
Service Desc: E04 AAC 3603 **Crew Area:** PUEBLO WEST
911 Address: 15 SILVERCLIFF DR TO **OMS Outage ID:** 783519
Multi-Meter Desc:
Comments:
No Comments Found

Substation: 3 **Circut/Feeder:** 211 **Phase/Switch:** B **Time Reported:** 06/29/2026 05:41:39
Name: [redacted] **Account Number:** 632302
Critical Handling: **Meter Nbr:** 20019554
City/State: SAN ISABEL, CO **Location:** E04 AAC 3603
Home Phone: [redacted] **Call Back Phone:** [redacted] **Section:** 236936030014
Power Status: Power Out **Cust OCR:**
Call Back Status: **Call Back Requested:**
Service Desc: E04 AAC 3603 **Crew Area:** PUEBLO WEST
911 Address: 221 CUSTER DR **OMS Outage ID:** 783519
Multi-Meter Desc:
Comments:
No Comments Found

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Bismarck, ND 58501-0564
Phone: (701) 557-5396
Phone: (800) 259-2659
FAX: (701) 557-5378

SECURITY and RESPONSE SERVICES
SRS Related Ticket

Created for: San Isabel Electric Association
Created on: 7/29/2026 at 9:18:20AM

Reporting Period 06/28/2026 12:00 AM To 06/29/2026 12:00 PM

Substation: 3 **Circut/Feeder:** 211 **Phase/Switch:** B **Time Reported:** 06/29/2026 06:32:11
Name: [redacted] **Account Number:** 524801
Critical Handling: **Meter Nbr:** 20002878
City/State: WETMORE, CO **Location:** D4 11 NEAR MILE MAR
Home Phone: [redacted] **Call Back Phone:** [redacted] **Section:** 226919830019
Power Status: Power Out **Cust OCR:**
Call Back Status: **Call Back Requested:**
Service Desc: D4 11 NEAR MILE MAR **Crew Area:** PUEBLO WEST
911 Address: 5987 HWY 165 W **OMS Outage ID:** 783519
Multi-Meter Desc:
Comments:
No Comments Found

Substation: 3 **Circut/Feeder:** 211 **Phase/Switch:** B **Time Reported:** 06/29/2026 06:32:11
Name: [redacted] **Account Number:** 633900
Critical Handling: **Meter Nbr:** 20000477
City/State: SAN ISABEL, CO **Location:** E3 12 DEER PEAK
Home Phone: [redacted] **Call Back Phone:** [redacted] **Section:** 237014840050
Power Status: Power Out **Cust OCR:**
Call Back Status: **Call Back Requested:**
Service Desc: E3 12 DEER PEAK **Crew Area:** PUEBLO WEST
911 Address: DEER PEAK **OMS Outage ID:** 783519
Multi-Meter Desc:
Comments:
No Comments Found

Substation: 3 **Circut/Feeder:** 211 **Phase/Switch:** A **Time Reported:** 06/29/2026 06:32:11
Name: [redacted] **Account Number:** 4555600
Critical Handling: **Meter Nbr:** 20000133
City/State: RYE, CO **Location:** E04 AAC 2576 FA L2 G
Home Phone: [redacted] **Call Back Phone:** [redacted] **Section:** 23692598
Power Status: Power Out **Cust OCR:**
Call Back Status: **Call Back Requested:**
Service Desc: E04 AAC 2576 FA L2 G **Crew Area:** PUEBLO WEST
911 Address: 361 BEAR CANYON DR **OMS Outage ID:** 783519
Multi-Meter Desc:
Comments:
No Comments Found

Security Response Services
1717 East Interstate Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58501-0564
Phone: (701) 557-5396
Phone: (800) 259-2659
FAX: (701) 557-5378

SECURITY and RESPONSE SERVICES
SRS Related Ticket

Created for: San Isabel Electric Association
Created on: 7/29/2026 at 9:18:20AM

Reporting Period 06/28/2026 12:00 AM To 06/29/2026 12:00 PM

Substation: 3 **Circut/Feeder:** 211 **Phase/Switch:** C **Time Reported:** 06/29/2026 10:30:12
Name: [redacted] **Account Number:** 840901
Critical Handling: **Meter Nbr:** 60794328
City/State: SAN ISABEL, CO **Location:** F4A TSI 0163
Home Phone: [redacted] **Call Back Phone:** [redacted] **Section:** 246901631407
Power Status: Power Out **Cust OCR:**
Call Back Status: **Call Back Requested:**
Service Desc: F4A TSI 0163 **Crew Area:** PUEBLO WEST
911 Address: 55 GOLFVIEW ST TOU **OMS Outage ID:** 783519
Multi-Meter Desc:
Comments:
No Comments Found

Substation: 3 **Circut/Feeder:** 211 **Phase/Switch:** C **Time Reported:** 06/29/2026 10:30:12
Name: [redacted] **Account Number:** 832901
Critical Handling: **Meter Nbr:** 20018167
City/State: SAN ISABEL, CO **Location:** F4A 22
Home Phone: [redacted] **Call Back Phone:** [redacted] **Section:** 246901230267
Power Status: Power Out **Cust OCR:**
Call Back Status: **Call Back Requested:**
Service Desc: F4A 22 **Crew Area:** PUEBLO WEST
911 Address: 195 GOLD HILL DR **OMS Outage ID:** 783519
Multi-Meter Desc:
Comments:
No Comments Found

Substation: 3 **Circut/Feeder:** 211 **Phase/Switch:** C **Time Reported:** 06/29/2026 10:30:12
Name: [redacted] **Account Number:** 796501
Critical Handling: **Meter Nbr:** 20019518
City/State: SAN ISABEL, CO **Location:** F05 B2 MTN REST 1ST
Home Phone: [redacted] **Call Back Phone:** [redacted] **Section:** 246818470022
Power Status: Power Out **Cust OCR:**
Call Back Status: **Call Back Requested:**
Service Desc: F05 B2 MTN REST 1ST **Crew Area:** PUEBLO WEST
911 Address: MOUNTAIN REST 1ST **OMS Outage ID:** 783519
Multi-Meter Desc:
Comments:
No Comments Found

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cotality™ Verify

STRIKEnet®Report

Claim or Reference #	DFPC260781
Insured/Property Owner	Aspen Acres Fire
STRIKEnet Report #	41582181
Coordinates	Latitude 38.008018, Longitude -105.066862
Reported Date Of Loss	06/29/2026
Search Period	06/28/2026 US MDT - 06/30/2026 US MDT
Search Radius	5.0 mi (8.0 km)
Report Generated	07/01/2026 at 18:59:53 MDT

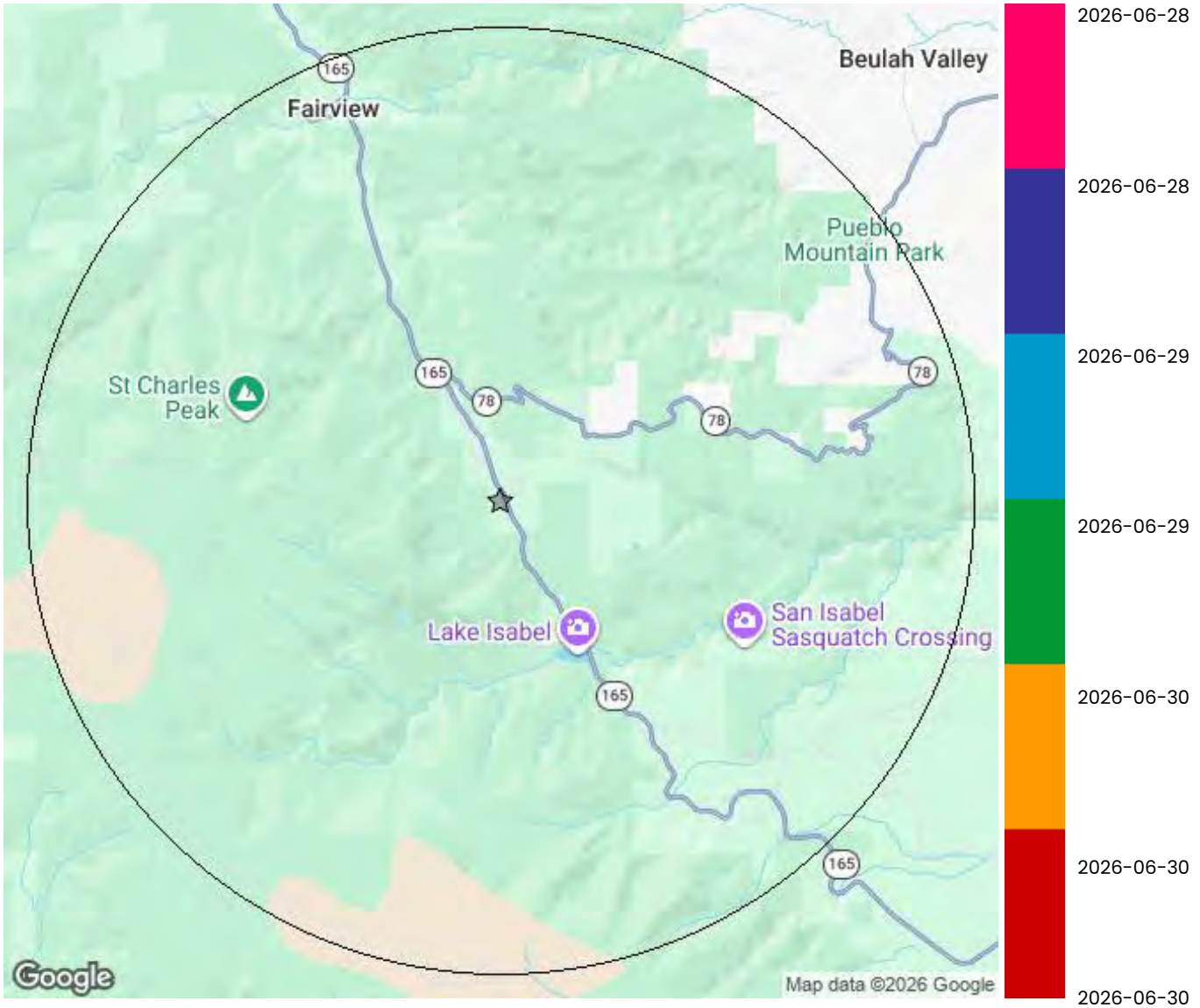
Summary

There were ZERO cloud-to-ground lightning strokes within 5 miles of the property for the dates inquired. STRIKEnet did not detect the presence of cloud-to-ground lightning strokes within 1 mile of the property for the dates inquired. As standard procedure the search radius was automatically increased to 5 miles.

Thank you for using STRIKEnet to validate lightning. Your report was generated by Cotality using data from Vaisala's National Lightning Detection Network® (NLDN), the most comprehensive lightning strike archive database in North America.

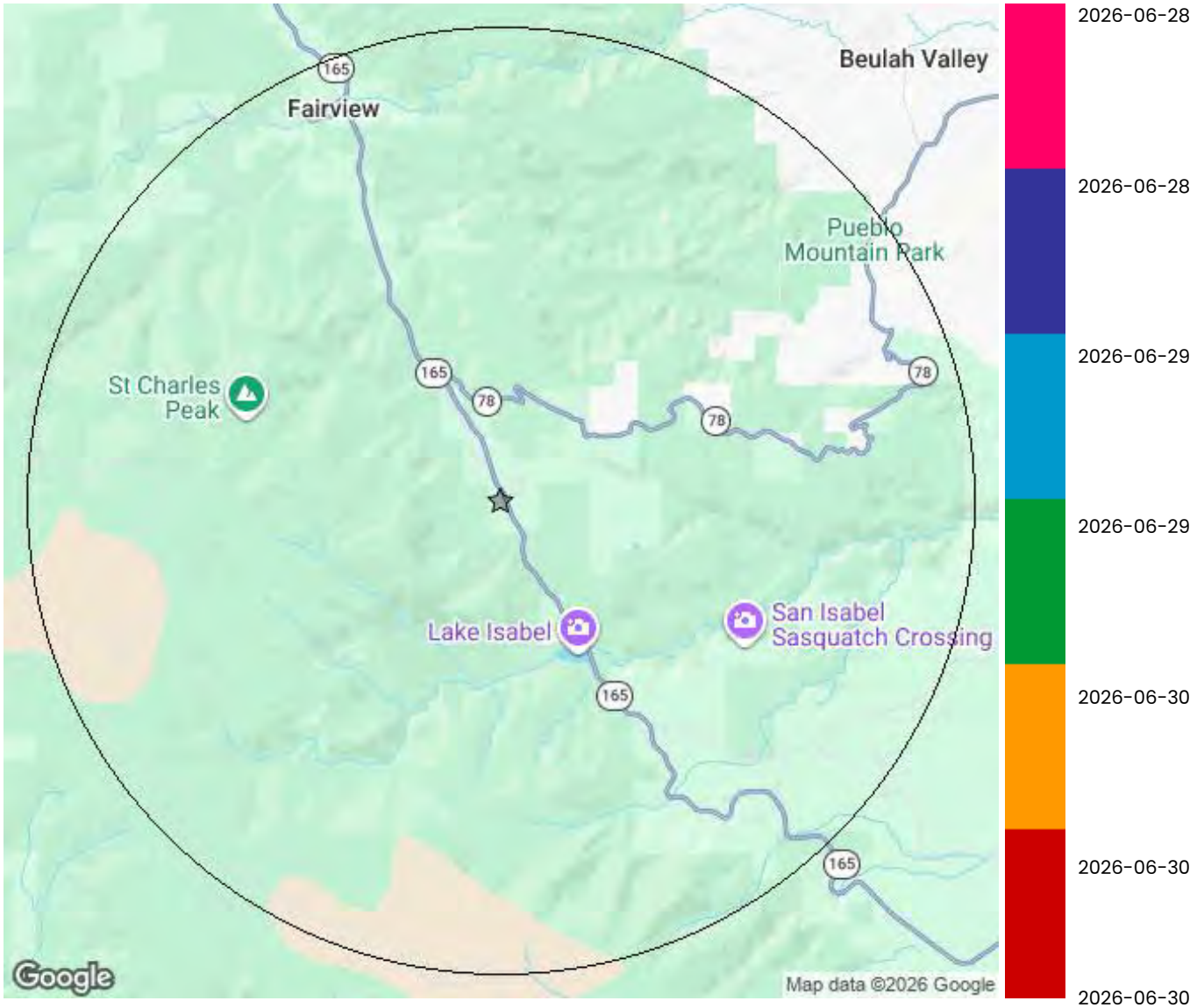
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Lightning Stroke Map



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Confidence Ellipses For Lightning Strokes



Lightning Confidence Ellipse Map indicates with 99% certainty that the recorded lightning event contacted the ground within the bounds of the ellipse.

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Key Results

Lightning Strokes Detected within 5.0 mi (8.0 km)	0

Number of Strokes Detected by Time Period

Period	# of Strokes
06/28/2026 00:00 US MDT - 06/28/2026 12:00 US MDT	0
06/28/2026 12:00 US MDT - 06/29/2026 00:00 US MDT	0
06/29/2026 00:00 US MDT - 06/29/2026 12:00 US MDT	0
06/29/2026 12:00 US MDT - 06/30/2026 00:00 US MDT	0
06/30/2026 00:00 US MDT - 06/30/2026 12:00 US MDT	0
06/30/2026 12:00 US MDT - 06/30/2026 23:59 US MDT	0

Lightning Strokes

Date	Time MDT	Peak Current (kA)	Distance from Center (mi/km)	Latitude	Longitude
No lightning detected within requested parameters.					

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About STRIKEnet®

Unlike other lightning verification methodologies, The STRIKEnet Report uses 25-plus years of lightning data acquired from the U.S. National Lightning Detection Network® (NLDN) and the Canadian Lightning Detection Network (CLDN). First introduced by Vaisala, Inc. in 1989 and later enhanced by the 2014 Cotality acquisition of Weather Fusion—a value-added reseller of Vaisala's STRIKEnet® Report—the lightning verification data that powers the STRIKEnet Reports is industry-recognized as the standard for accuracy based on thousands of peer-reviewed citations.

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Wind Verification Report

Claim or Reference #	DFPC260781
Insured/Property Owner	Aspen Acres Fire
Coordinates	Latitude 38.008018, Longitude -105.066862
Reported Date Of Loss	06/29/2026
Date Range	07/01/2016 to 06/30/2026
Report Generated	07/01/2026

Storm Events

	Estimated Maximum Windspeed			
Date	**At Location**	**Within 1 Miles**	**Within 3 Miles**	**Within 5 Miles**
06/30/2026	42 MPH	42 MPH	42 MPH	43 MPH
06/29/2026	50 MPH	50 MPH	50 MPH	52 MPH
06/28/2026	44 MPH	44 MPH	44 MPH	45 MPH
02/17/2026	59 MPH	60 MPH	62 MPH	62 MPH
04/17/2025	58 MPH	58 MPH	58 MPH	59 MPH
02/07/2025	62 MPH	63 MPH	65 MPH	70 MPH
11/26/2024	59 MPH	59 MPH	61 MPH	63 MPH
11/24/2024	63 MPH	64 MPH	64 MPH	66 MPH
05/05/2024	62 MPH	63 MPH	66 MPH	66 MPH
12/02/2022	50 MPH	51 MPH	58 MPH	67 MPH
11/09/2022	58 MPH	58 MPH	58 MPH	59 MPH
10/23/2022	53 MPH	55 MPH	58 MPH	58 MPH
10/22/2022	57 MPH	57 MPH	58 MPH	59 MPH
05/09/2022	58 MPH	59 MPH	61 MPH	63 MPH
05/08/2022	61 MPH	61 MPH	61 MPH	67 MPH
04/22/2022	54 MPH	55 MPH	58 MPH	58 MPH
04/12/2022	75 MPH	77 MPH	82 MPH	82 MPH
04/11/2022	70 MPH	72 MPH	76 MPH	76 MPH
04/05/2022	68 MPH	68 MPH	69 MPH	72 MPH
12/26/2021	58 MPH	59 MPH	63 MPH	63 MPH
12/15/2021	60 MPH	60 MPH	61 MPH	71 MPH
03/29/2021	56 MPH	56 MPH	58 MPH	59 MPH
11/07/2020	59 MPH	60 MPH	60 MPH	61 MPH
02/03/2019	61 MPH	61 MPH	61 MPH	61 MPH
04/17/2018	64 MPH	64 MPH	64 MPH	65 MPH

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	Estimated Maximum Windspeed			
Date	At Location	Within 1 Miles	Within 3 Miles	Within 5 Miles
04/12/2018	61 MPH	61 MPH	61 MPH	63 MPH
03/04/2018	57 MPH	58 MPH	58 MPH	58 MPH
03/23/2017	58 MPH	58 MPH	61 MPH	61 MPH
03/06/2017	57 MPH	57 MPH	58 MPH	62 MPH
01/09/2017	60 MPH	60 MPH	60 MPH	76 MPH
12/25/2016	61 MPH	62 MPH	62 MPH	64 MPH
12/16/2016	58 MPH	58 MPH	58 MPH	62 MPH
12/15/2016	62 MPH	63 MPH	65 MPH	65 MPH

- Wind dates begin at 6am CST on the indicated day and end at 6am CST the following day.
- Report contains all events where wind of 58 MPH or greater was detected within 3 miles of the location.
- Wind speeds within this report represent 3-second wind gusts at 10 meters, starting at 40 MPH and increasing in 1 MPH increments.
- Date of loss field will ignore the normal threshold of 58 MPH within 3 miles, and will report any wind speed down to 40 MPH.
- Date of loss is now a 72-hour window around the specified date. The report will show the highest wind speed detected within this window and list the relevant date. If wind occurs 24 hours before or after, those dates will also be included.

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More Information

Storm dates begin at 6 am CST on the reported day and end at 6 am the following day.
Events between 07/01/2016 and 06/30/2026. The shaded cells indicate wind speed.

58 MPH - 64 MPH	65 MPH - 69 MPH	70 MPH +

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Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control
Investigations Branch
1697 Cole Blvd, Suite 200, Lakewood, CO 80401, (303) 239-4100, invadmin@state.co.us

ADDENDUM

Aspen Acres Wildfire

This addendum was authored on October 7, 2026, by Division of Fire Prevention and Control Investigator Josh Dreher to address confusing information found in Section 8, Weather Information and Section 6, paragraph 1.

The analysis and opinions expressed in this investigation are founded on accepted principles of fire scene reconstruction, supported by established methods of analysis and investigation. All conclusions are based solely on the documented facts and the information available at the time this report was prepared. Evidence supporting these findings is cited within the report or appendixes to reinforce the opinions rendered.

I received an email from Custer County Sheriff Lloyd "Rich" Smith on October 6, 2026, expressing some confusion related to the reported weather discrepancies outlined in section 8 and the attached appendix; Wind Verification Report. OpenWeather utilizes multiple weather stations to pull data. The weather station utilized for data collection was listed as the Colorado City station as listed on https://weather-maps.openweathermap.org/. This station is not in the area of origin for the Aspen Acres Fire. Colorado City is located off CO-Highway 165 west of Interstate 25, with a distance from Colorado City to the area of origin of approximately 17 miles. The Wind Verification Report is more accurate to obtain wind data as it utilizes coordinates at the area of origin.

The first initial 911 call was placed by a passerby on CO-Highway 165 at 5:39 a.m. Witness Guy Richter first observed the smoke south of Aspen Acres Campground from his porch at 5:45 a.m. The report stated at the onset of the fire as this occurred within the first few minutes of when the fire was reported by a passerby and when Guy Richter observed smoke.

After reviewing the initial investigation report, I recognize a need to clarify specific statements from my previously authored report.

The data in this case is presented accurately to the best of my knowledge at the time of writing. Nevertheless, findings and conclusions remain subject to change, if new or relevant information emerges. In such circumstances, the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control reserves the right to evaluate new data and adjust professional opinions in accordance with recognized investigative standards, such as NFPA 921 and applicable ASTM guidelines.