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**BREAKING**

Public Safety

## Berryessa wildfire prompts evacuations of homes, horses

Register staff Aug 11, 2017



A helicopter drops water on a grass fire near Turtle Rock at Lake Berryessa on Friday afternoon. By late afternoon it had burned 100 acres.

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J.L. Sousa, Register

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Cal Fire mobilized Friday afternoon to fight a wildland fire near the south end of Lake Berryessa that caused evacuations and road closures.

The fire was reported around 1 p.m. By 3:30 p.m., it had burned 100 acres, was 10 percent contained and was still threatening structures.

By late afternoon, the threat had diminished.

As of 7 p.m. Cal Fire reported the amount of acreage burned was still 100 acres and was 25 percent contained, while evacuation warnings were still in effect for the immediate area on Highway 128.

Cal Fire called the blaze the Canyon Fire and described the terrain as “steep, rocky, with heavy dry brush pockets of timber.”

Evacuations were ordered from homes along Capell Valley Road/Highway 128 between Lower Chiles and Capell Valley Cross Road. Horses were also being evacuated from the R-Ranch recreation development at 1962 Capell Valley Road.

“It’s close,” Vicki Chrest of the ranch said by phone at 3:15 p.m. “We evacuated all the people out of the ranch and we’re working on getting the horses out right now, to be safe. We were definitely threatened. We don’t want to take any chances, in case it comes back.”

The California Highway Patrol and the Napa County Sheriff’s Office were staffing road closures at Sage Canyon Road at Lower Chiles Valley Road, Highway 128 at Moskowite Corner, and Knoxville Road at Spanish Flat.

On the ground, 162 people had been assigned to battle the blaze. Equipment included five air tankers, four bulldozers, three helicopters, 15 engines and seven water tenders.

Marcia Ritz said her Spanish Flat County Store & Deli had become a place for locals to come for information on the fire.

“It’s about five miles away from

us, but we can see the smoke and we’ve had a lot of ash,” Ritz said at 3 p.m. “A lot of planes going over. We’re on alert, but it’s not heading toward us.”

Stu Williams watched the fire from his house on a ridge at Berryessa Highlands. He could see flames kick up, the air tankers knock them down with retardant and then kick up again.

Berryessa Highlands as of 3 p.m. was under no evacuation order, being several miles away from the fire.

“We’ve made plans to leave, to get our (dog and cats) out of here,” Williams said. “We’re concerned and we’re watching. We’ve all got our finger crossed. It’s a scary thing.”

Napa Community Animal Response Team (NCART), a local volunteer organization that offers large animal transport during emergency situations, deployed 25 volunteers to R-Ranch and rescued 50 horses.

“We took directive from 911 dispatchers and headed out there to help relocate horses to safety,” said NCART vice president Saanen Kerson. “We’ve activated two sites to house the horses until we get the all clear from authorities that it is safe for the horses to return.”

As of 6 p.m. Friday, NCART volunteers remained on standby in case they needed to deploy again. Kerson said NCART has organized volunteers to help tend to the horse through the weekend at relocation sites at Valley Brook Equestrian Center and NAPA Valley Horseman Association.

Jameson Animal Rescue Ranch in St. Helena is taking donations to cover the costs for food/hay, bedding and manure disposal at the relocation sites. To donate, visit [jamesonanimalrescueranch.org/donations-home](http://jamesonanimalrescueranch.org/donations-home). Sunrise Horse Rescue in Calistoga has also been involved with the rescue and volunteer effort.

Smoke from the fire could be seen from the upper Napa Valley. The drone of air tankers could be heard overhead.

