

## Wind fuels large range fire north of Paoli

Written by Chris Lee

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No structures were harmed as a large fire six miles north of Paoli broke out Thursday morning, Oct. 18.

At 10:05 a.m. the sirens sounded in Holyoke, summoning Holyoke Volunteer Fire Department to the mutual-aid fire. Shortly after, smoke filled the noses of those in Holyoke, raising some concern.

Winds were gusting upward of 50 mph throughout the day, which brought back memories for those firefighters who helped fight the massive Heartstrong Fire in March.

Haxtun Fire Chief Steve Statz estimated wind gusts were at or above where they were back in March.



**Numerous tractors with discs were used to help contain the fire six miles north of Paoli Thursday, Oct. 18. An estimated 1,100 acres were burned by the fire, which was started after a transformer fell to the ground. Ten area fire departments were summoned to the fire, which spread quickly as wind gusts reached upward of 50 mph. This photo was taken Friday morning at the intersection of County Roads 36 and 23, north of Paoli. □ □**

—Enterprise photo

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Last Thursday's fire was sparked when a transformer fell from a power pole. After driving around the burn area Friday morning, Statz estimated the fire burned around 1,100 acres. Initial reports estimated 3,800 acres had burned but after the dust settled Friday, Statz estimated 1,100.

He said the fire burned for about five miles and was around 1/4 of a mile to 1/2 mile wide at parts.

Fields with CRP, corn stalks and wheat stubble appear to be the only affected areas.

Statz said no structures were involved, although the fire did come dangerously close to one residence. He said by the grace of God, the fire didn't jump the road and stayed approximately 100 yards from the house.

Ten surrounding agencies were called to the fire and were aided by numerous tractors with discs as well as water tanks. Statz said extra radios were given to tractor drivers as they coordinated the effort to bring the fire to a halt.

Thankfully, a green wheat field was found and some CRP was disced up as firefighters managed to bring the fire to a standstill.

"They just showed up and started working," Statz said of area farmers in tractors. The radios provided the much-needed communication to make the fight successful.

The chief said they really appreciated the effort from everyone involved. Behind the scenes, volunteers kept firefighters fed and hydrated throughout the day.

Statz said the call came in just after 10 a.m. and the final trucks were called home sometime

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between 3:30-4 p.m.

Statz said there were about 80,000-100,000 gallons of water on scene, not counting any of the fire department rigs.

Numerous trucks hauled water to the scene to be available for the firefighters.



**Visibility along Highway 6 west of Holyoke was poor late Thursday morning and early afternoon, Oct. 18. In addition to the smoke from the fire, dust filled the air after being swept from area fields.□□**

**—Enterprise photo**

Statz said some firefighters experienced dust and dirt in their eyes which needed to be flushed. One Holyoke fireman also received some burns to his hands.

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Departments from Sedgwick, Ovid, Holyoke, Amherst, Wauneta, Yuma, Wages, Sterling and Fleming joined Haxtun in the effort.

HVFD has busy week

Wednesday, Oct. 17, HVFD was called to a mutual-aid fire 11 miles east and one and a half south of Holyoke. The call came in at 2:35 p.m., summoning the department to help Amherst Fire Department at a fire that was burning in corn stalks.

Friday morning, Oct. 19, the whistles blew again as the fire department was called to a two-vehicle accident on East Denver Street at the intersection of Coleman Avenue. Some extrication was needed and they assisted Holyoke EMS.

Holyoke Enterprise October 25, 2012