

DAILY NEWS photo by Bob Vines

SMOKE ON THE WATER: The Arnica Fire near Yellowstone Lake, above, has burned 14.5 square miles in Yellowstone Park as of Monday. Fire officials have taken precautions at Lake Village by using a sprinkler system to help protect the historic buildings.

Crews battle blaze at Yellowstone National Park

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK (AP) — Crews battling a 14.5-square-mile wildfire in Yellowstone National Park contended with unusually low humidity Monday and awaited a weather system that could bring winds and precipitation.

The Arnica Fire in southeastern Yellowstone had consumed about 9,300 acres, said Tom Kempton, a fire information officer for the National Park Service.

Lightning started the fire Sept. 13. It expanded to 250 acres by last Thursday and grew quickly over the weekend in warm, dry, windy conditions.

Monday turned out to be an “easy to moderate day” for fire crews because of calm winds, said Bob Summerfield, a fire information officer.

“The humidity was pretty low, but it seems to need the wind to really make much happen,” Summerfield said Monday evening.

Kempton said fire managers were closely monitoring the weather forecast. Meteorologists predicted Monday’s calm winds would pick on Tuesday to 23 to 29 mph from the southwest. The forecast also called for rain, temperatures in the mid-30s and possible snow.

“The wind as this storm system comes in can certainly accelerate the fire, but at the same time we’re anticipating moisture along with that,” Kempton said.

The fire was burning in areas containing 300-year-old lodgepole pines and across terrain that’s burned in recent years, Kempton said. No park facilities were evacuated.

Crews attacked the fire with engines and helicopters near the Bridge Bay area, where there are some visitor-services facilities, Kempton said. A total of 230 people, five helicopters and 15 engines were assigned to the fire.