

Cold, snow on way to site of Arnica fire

Weather may end park fire

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YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK - Crews worked to control a wildfire burning at Yellowstone National Park on Tuesday and monitored the approach of a cold front that could prove to be a "season-ending event," a spokesman said.

The Arnica fire burning near Yellowstone Lake was mostly inactive Monday and Tuesday, and fire managers had not reassessed its size since measuring the fire at 9,300 acres, or 14.5 square miles, on Monday.

While firefighters braced for windy conditions Tuesday, there weren't any major developments, fire information officer Tom Kempton said.

"They'll continue to use the helicopters as they are able to prevent and control any spot fires that develop from wind-blown embers," Kempton said. "They'll continue with the sprinkler systems and the irrigation systems in and around the housing area."

The fire has not burned any structures or prompted any evacuations. Helicopters were dumping water to suppress the fire near Bridge Bay and slow its advance toward the Lake Village area, about 2½ miles from the fire, Kempton said.

Forecasters said the cold front could bring thunderstorms and snow showers overnight. Today's forecast called for winds under 10 mph, snow and temperatures ranging from 15 degrees to the mid-30s.

"If it starts to rain and snow, we might very well be in a situation that in firefighting parlance they call a season-ending event, which means there's more than enough moisture to quell the fires and with the much cooler temperatures, there's very little growth in any fires and they eventually just go out," he said.

Fire officials had been spraying water and preparing hoses around the Lake Village area for the past several days. The area is home to the historic Lake Hotel as well as employee housing. Crews were also wetting down the West Thumb Marina area as a precaution.

"Sprinklers have been running to keep the area humid if embers should develop from winds and driving the fire," Kempton said.

A 1½-mile section of Grand Loop Road between Lake Village and West Thumb and will remain closed indefinitely, Kempton said. However, Lake Village is still accessible, as are the Lake Hotel, Lake Lodge and the Old Faithful area, park officials said.

"As the fire burns into the root systems of those trees, the fire-damaged trees do continue to fall on the roadway area," Kempton said. "Crews did a little bit of work (Monday) trying to fall some more of those snags and get them out, but with the winds expected today, it will be on a case-by-case basis whether it's safe to work in there or not."