



KENNEWICK FIRE DEPARTMENT

Dedicated to providing excellent public service and ensuring the safety and well-being of our community and one another. We live, act, and serve our community with the utmost integrity.

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: September 23, 2022
Contact: Chad Michael, Fire Chief
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KFD# 22-10043

[Kennewick, WA] On Thursday, September 22, 2022, at 4:26 p.m., fire crews from Benton County Fire District 1 were dispatched to a reported wildfire at U.S. Route 395 and Interstate 82. When crews arrived on-scene, they observed a wildfire that had already quickly spread. The fire was extending to the north at a rapid rate of speed, and was making its way toward a large commercial building. The initial arriving Incident Commander from Benton County Fire District 1 requested additional resources to help mitigate the incident, including requesting resources to be dispatched for a commercial building fire.

The Kennewick Fire Department was dispatched at 4:38 p.m. to respond to the commercial building fire. The first KFD crew arrived on scene in under five minutes from the time of dispatch. The crew observed fire coming from CentiMark Roofing, located at 4822 Southridge Blvd. The fire coming from this large commercial building was threatening a second commercial business, Watts Construction, located at 4828 Southridge Blvd.

Two separate Incident Commanders led emergency operations during the initial stages of this incident. The initial arriving Incident Commander from Benton County Fire District 1 directed the actions of all on-scene wildfire resources working to extinguish the wildfire and prevent it from spreading. The Initial arriving Chief Officer from the Kennewick Fire Department served as the Incident Commander on the commercial building fire. Firefighting efforts on the commercial structure fire focused on keeping it contained to the CentiMark Roofing building. Approximately 30 minutes into the incident, Chief Michael from the Kennewick Fire Department established command over both incidents. The Benton County Fire District 1 Incident Commander overseeing the wildfire began serving as the Wildfire Branch Director and the Kennewick Fire Department Incident Commander overseeing the commercial building fire began serving as the Structure Branch Director. The change in the incident command structure was made to best facilitate coordination between all firefighting activities and assistance provided by supporting agencies (law enforcement and public works).

As a precaution, residents from a number of homes located along Southridge Blvd and W. 41st Ave. were evacuated during the initial stages of the wildfire incident, in the event the fire could not be quickly contained. The exceptional work done by the crews fighting the wildfire prevented it from spreading across U.S. Route 395 and escaping into the residential neighborhood nearby.

The approximate 70-acre wildfire was determined to be under control within 45-60 minutes of onset. Wildfire crews spent several hours afterwards ensuring all hot spots were extinguished. Additional personnel remained on-site throughout the night to ensure the fire remained fully extinguished.

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The fire at CentiMark Roofing provided a number of challenges to firefighting crews and was not brought under control until 9:30 p.m. It was determined that a track hoe would ultimately be needed to assist with demolishing the building in sections in order to reach the remaining deep-seated fire located within the building. The Kennewick Fire Department received assistance from Watts Construction with this task. Working side-by-side with a track hoe operator, firefighting crews were able to extinguish a number of large hot spots. KFD crews continued to work on extinguishing hot spots throughout the night, and have received additional assistance from the track hoe operator again this morning with extinguishing additional hot spots. KFD crews will be remaining on-scene throughout most of the day today to complete extinguishment of this fire.

A thorough evaluation of the area determined that a number of combustible materials located beside the commercial building provided fuel that allowed the fire to rapidly spread inside of the building after the materials caught fire.

Given the challenging conditions present at the time the fire occurred (high winds, dry fuels, and a rapidly spreading fire), firefighting crews did an exceptional job of mitigating two side-by-side, simultaneous and difficult fire situations. This was the result of close coordination between a number of different agencies including: the Kennewick Fire Department, Benton County Fire District 1, Benton County Fire District 4, the Hanford Fire Department, the Pasco Fire Department, Franklin County Fire District 3, the Kennewick Police Department, Washington State Patrol, Washington Department of Transportation, the Kennewick Public Works Department, the Southeast Communications Center (SECOMM), and Watts Construction.

Although the fire started within the jurisdictional boundaries of Benton County Fire District 1, the majority of the fire ended up within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Kennewick Fire Department. The assistance of Franklin County Fire District 3 Fire Chief Mike Harris was requested to determine the cause of the fire. After a thorough investigation, the cause was determined to be carbon that had likely come from the buildup in the exhaust system of a large commercial vehicle traveling along Interstate 82. Carbon evidence was collected at the area of origin located along the south side of Interstate 82, but a responsible vehicle was not identified.

The Kennewick Fire Department would like to remind everyone that although temperatures are beginning to cool, local fire fuels are still extremely dry. High caution should be used in order to prevent engaging in any activities that could lead to a wildfire.

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