



KENNEWICK FIRE DEPARTMENT

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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: Monday, May 22, 2023
Contact: Chad Michael, Fire Chief
Phone: 509-820-0460
KFD#: 2305220

[Kennewick, WA] On Sunday, May 21, 2023, at 5:59 p.m., fire crews from the Kennewick Fire Department (KFD) were dispatched to a reported natural cover fire in Zintel Canyon near W. 7th and S. Vancouver. Calls to 9-1-1 reported multiple trees on fire and heavy black smoke. Additional callers reported hot embers falling and starting smoldering fires on rooftops in nearby neighborhoods.

The first KFD crew arrived on scene within 5 minutes of being dispatched. Upon arrival, the crew observed fire burning in natural vegetation about a half-acre in size and growing rapidly due to wind gusts of 15-25 mph. Additional firefighting resources were requested which ultimately resulted in a multi-agency response from Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla counties, along with the response of the Kennewick Parks, Police and Public Works departments.

The incident commander placed an immediate priority on protecting structures threatened by the fire, estimated at just under two dozen homes. Kennewick Police officers assisted with Level 3 (Go!) evacuation of homes threatened by fire, as well as following up on reports of individuals fleeing the Spirit of American Trail in the Zintel Canyon Greenway. As additional units arrived, firefighters worked to contain and extinguish the natural cover fire occurring inside the greenway.

Three structures sustained damage in the fire: one home and one out-building were a total loss, and a second home experienced minor damage. No residents or firefighters were injured; however, one firefighter experienced a minor medical emergency and was treated on-scene. The American Red Cross is assisting the family that occupied the home that was destroyed.

The cause of this 20-30 acre wildland fire remains under investigation and investigators are on the ground today. The Zintel Canyon Greenway is closed and **the public is urged to heed the no trespassing signs and not enter the area**. Branches and whole trees damaged by fire continue to fall and obstruct the Spirit of America Trail creating unsafe conditions for recreation. Smoldering trees, roots, and other hot spots will remain active for several days. The Kennewick Fire, Parks, and Police Departments will continue to monitor and patrol the area as hazards remain in the greenway. The Kennewick Fire Department would like to encourage everyone to only call in concerns about smoke or fire if it is noticed to be outside of the fire containment area.

The Kennewick Fire Department is interested in hearing from people that may have witnesses this fire starting. Anyone with information should contact Deputy Fire Marshal Ethan Bishop at (509) 947-0437.

This fire is a stark reminder that wildland fires can consume homes in the wildland-urban interface – defined as areas where homes are built near or among natural fuels prone to wildland fire. Studies show that as many as 80 percent of homes lost to wildland fire may have been saved if brush around the homes were cleared and

defensible space created around structures. There is no better time than now to prepare your property and to ready your family, friends and neighbors for wildfire. Please help us out by ensuring natural vegetation and combustible materials are at least 30 feet away from your home.

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