



# DNR NEWS

Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
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## Fire Incident Report

### Black River Falls Fire

May 22, 2009

10:30am

Incident Update #4

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#### Current Status:

- **Location:** 7 miles SW of the city of Ishpeming
- The area is rural with homes scattered through the area and in several small subdivisions
- There are no known injuries or deaths
- All road closure and evacuation orders have been lifted from all locations on the fire, however non-residents are encouraged to avoid the area to minimize congestion and allow residents the ability to move freely and check for property damage.

#### Changes since last update:

- 33 structures lost, including 21 residences, many more were saved
- **Size:** 811 acres (The acreage has been revised downward slightly due to better mapping of the firelines)
- The fire is now estimated at 98% contained. The remaining uncontained area is in some low lying area being worked on today.
- An investigation is underway to determine the cause of the fire.
- The Upper Peninsula Power Company was in the area yesterday, replacing lost power poles and restoring power to 98% of the residences in the area of the fire.
- Two meetings were held yesterday at Westwood High School to inform evacuees of fire status and to notify them of the re-opening of County Road 581 to provide them access to their residences. The evacuation order was lifted at 8pm to allow most fire personnel to finish work for the day and clear the area before that time, to minimize congestion. Law enforcement monitored the traffic to provide for a safer access.

#### Resources committed to incident:

- A DNR Incident Command Team under Incident Commander Paul Gaberdiel remains in control of the fire, along with personnel and equipment from DNR stations across the Upper Peninsula.

- Also assigned to the fire today were personnel and equipment from the Michigan State Police, Marquette County Sheriff Department, and local Volunteer Fire Departments.
- Working on the fire today were about 50 personnel, 2 dozers, and 11 engines carrying water. This is in addition the law enforcement units on patrol.

#### **Weather**

- The weather today is expected to be sunny with winds shifting direction during the day. The rain yesterday should continue to limit fire behavior today, although drying will continue. The crews should continue to make good progress on the fire, especially working in the lower wetter areas where terrain makes access difficult.

#### **Fire History:**

- The fire started shortly before 5 pm on May 20 in heavy jack pine and moved into lower, wetter types. There was no significant movement of the fire on May 21 and good progress was made on line construction and mopup. Cause remains unknown at this time but is now being investigated.

#### **Announcements/ Additional Information:**

- The Marquette County Humane Society advises that anyone finding or losing a pet or experiencing a need for sheltering an animal to please call the animal shelter at 475-6661. If you have an animal related emergency please call central dispatch at 475-9912.
- The American Red Cross will be conducting damage assessments on Friday, May 22, to determine additional assistance that may be possible through the Red Cross. If your home sustained major damage or was destroyed in the fire, please call the Red Cross office as soon as possible between 9am and 5pm on Friday, May 22. You may also leave a message during the evenings through the Memorial Day weekend at 906-249-9665, or 906-361-4090.
- Three other organizations are offering assistance to those impacted by the fire. Name and contact information are provided for all three:
  - Salvation Army – 906-486-8121
  - Pigs and Heat c/o Marquette Police Department – 906-228-0400
  - St Vincent DePaul Society – 906-226-3840
- There have been requests for information about where donations may be sent to aid those whose homes have been impacted by the fire. Contact information is provided for two organizations accepting donations to provide aid:
  - Salvation Army, Ishpeming (Liz Nevela) – 906-486-8121
  - PC-Medic – 906-486-9911
- Thanks again to all the emergency personnel for continuing to prevent any injuries on the fire and keeping down what could have been a very high number of structure losses.
- Fire personnel are very appreciative of the cooperation of all residents in the area, allowing solid daily progress to be made on the fire, and easing safety concerns on the incident.