

Post
Wildfire

Threatens

Davenport, Fire & Fire Protection Bonny Doon

2000 - 8-4-09
A wildfire that started the evening of Aug. 12 near the Lockheed Martin plant in northern Santa Cruz County burned 2,300 acres overnight. By the next day, Cal Fire had issued mandatory evacuations for as many as 1,000 homes in the Swanton and Bonny Doon areas as the fire expanded to 2,800 acres.

A sense of déjà-vu hung over the county along with the yellowish haze created by plumes of smoke. The scene resembled that of the Martin fire last June, with animal evacuation teams heading in as streams of residents poured out of the mountain community.

No cause had been identified.

Cal Fire sent additional crews from around the state to help battle the blaze, including support from six air tankers.

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LOCKHEED FIRE



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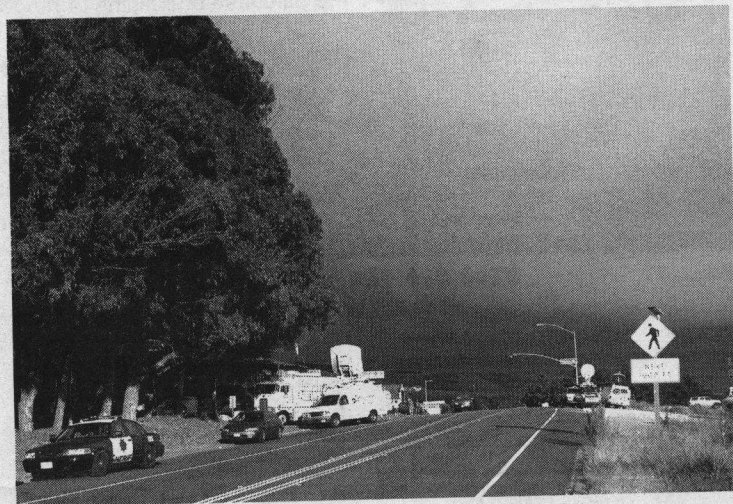
The fire had moved within about one-and-a-half miles of Bonny Doon by the evening of Aug. 13, according to Cal Fire public information officer and Battalion Chief Julie Hutchinson, making that area Cal Fire's greatest concern.

"We're hoping the wind will die down and come from the west," she said.

However, at 7 p.m. at the Davenport Fire Station, Cal Fire public information officer Daniel Beriant noted that winds had subsided but still stubbornly headed south - in the direction of Bonny Doon. At that time, there was no containment reported. About 670 firefighters were battling the blaze.

Early on Aug. 13, Cal Fire had requested 100 fire engines from around the state to converge on Bonny Doon. While Cal Fire crews were working at the northern end of the fire cutting a break to be certain when the blaze turned back north the next day it would get no further, engines from California fire departments were protecting homes in and around Bonny Doon and the Swanton area.

No injuries or structure damage had been reported by 7 p.m. on Aug. 13.



Top: Helicopters were used successfully in containing last year's Martin fire, but the wide-ranging Lockheed fire is proving more challenging.

Below: News crews wait in Davenport for the latest updates from Cal Fire and County Sheriff's officials. The small coastal town became the information base for news coming from the rough inland terrain.

Most residents have complied with the mandatory evacuation order, according to Sheriff's Sgt. Greg Landsdowne. With the help of 15 allied agencies, about 50 officers and deputies evacuated homes and kept access roads blockaded.

While some residents refused to leave, Landsdowne said that if the fire gets closer, deputies will continue evacuation efforts. In the meantime, the area's large animals have been taken to the county fairgrounds in Watsonville and the small animals are at the county's animal shelter in Live Oak.

To be certain no looting takes place, additional deputies are on active patrol in the evacuated neighborhoods.

An evacuation center was established at the Vintage Church at Highway 1 and Mission Street.

This year's first major wildfire in Santa Cruz County, dubbed the Lockheed fire, has already surpassed last year's Martin fire in the same area of the county. That fire claimed only 600 acres, although three homes were lost.

The Martin fire was considered suspicious but no arrests were ever made. ■