

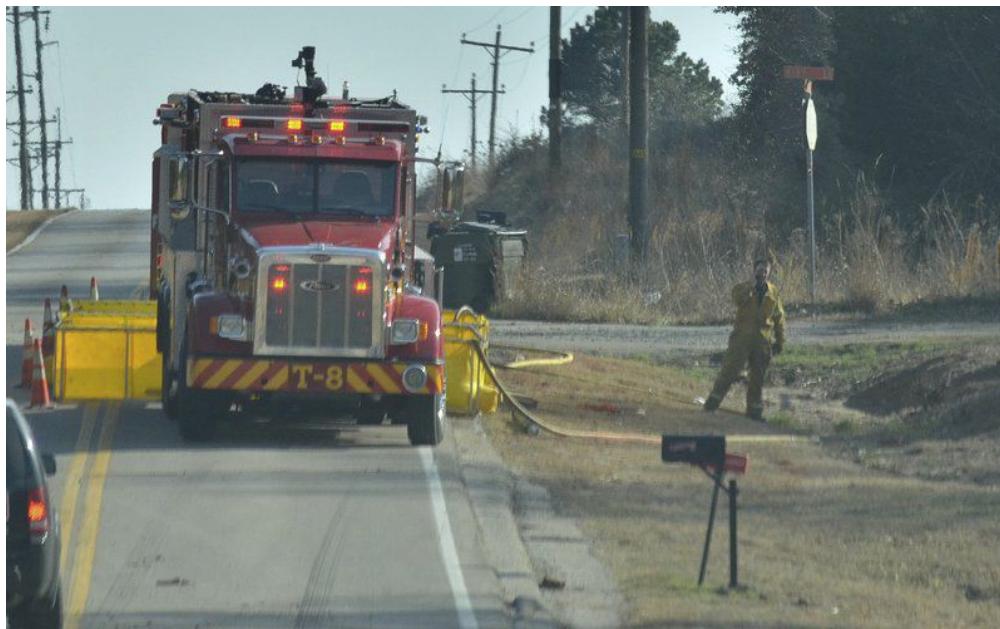


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FEATURED

## Brush fire forces evacuations in northeast Norman, burns 100-plus acres

By Adam Troxell Transcript Staff Writer Mar 4, 2017



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Kyle Phillips / The Transcript

Norman firefighters sets up a water area during a grass fire Friday in northeast Norman.



A brush fire near Lake Thunderbird burned more than 100 acres and forced about 100 people from their homes Friday afternoon.

Norman Fire Department evacuated between 80 and 100 residences on Torrane Lane, Prairie Lane, Mary Lane, Tallywood, Mystic Isle and Bethel Road east of 108th Avenue. The fire originated from a spot between 108th and 120th avenues, north of Franklin Road and south of Bethel.

The cause is under investigation. The fire was called in at around 1:20 p.m., Norman Fire Chief Travis King said. Oklahoma Forestry Service last reported that the fire had consumed about 125 acres.

The combined efforts of local fire departments slowed the fire. Shortly after 5 p.m. Friday, Cleveland County Commissioner Darry Stacy said the fire was mostly contained. Residents began returning to their homes around 5:45 p.m.

The Cleveland County Task Force used bulldozers to dig fire lines, clearing brush away to control the spreading.

Meanwhile, OFS operated a National Guard Blackhawk helicopter to perform water drops in hard-to-reach areas.

"They're getting water where we can't get to," King said. "Those areas I was talking about that are heavily wooded, where we can't get vehicles or people to, we're able to get those Blackhawk helicopters into."

Norman fire officials began evacuating homes less than an hour after responding. King said the department used a callback system to alert residents in certain areas, and no structures sustained damage.

"We initiated our 911 callback system, so about a mile ahead of that fire front, where it originated, we had mandatory evacuations, and a mile ahead of that, we prepared folks for evacuation," King said. "We had some close calls ... but right now, we're not getting any reports of structures involved."

A fire warning was issued for residents in the area. Those ordered to evacuate were asked to travel north out of the blaze.

Dry weather conditions and a swirling wind made putting out the fire difficult, King said. The wind also caused embers to spread to other areas.

"It's a tough day, I'll tell you what, with the humidity like it is," King said. "It's been swirling out there, moving to the west and moving to the east, so it's been tricky, but I think we're getting close. The fuels are so dry and the winds were so sporadic, we were having some spotting issues."

Cleveland County commissioners convened an emergency meeting during the brush fire to issue a burn ban. According to the ban order, "it is unlawful for any person to set fire to any forest, grass, range, crop or other wildlands, or to build a campfire or bonfire, or to burn trash or other material that may cause a forest, grass, range, crop or other wildlands fire."

Conditions are still favorable for fires to spread today, with humidity low and south winds blowing between 19 and 26 miles per hour, according to the National Weather Service.

Transcript senior staff writer Joy Hampton contributed to this article.

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**MON 6** **Story Time!**  
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Adam Troxell

