

## Tuesday fire shuts down highway, burns small homeless camp

Written by Elizabeth Larson

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LAKEPORT, Calif. – Firefighters contained a Tuesday wildland fire in the city of Lakeport that temporarily closed a portion of Highway 29 and burned a car in a small homeless camp.

The fire was first dispatched at around 1:30 p.m. Tuesday on Martin Street at Smith Street, across from the Lake County Sheriff's Office.

Lakeport Fire units arriving at scene reported about a half an acre of grass burning with a nearby structure threatened, according to radio reports.

In addition to Lakeport Fire units, assistance came from Kelseyville Fire, Northshore Fire and Cal Fire, and the city of Lakeport, which provided a water tender from its nearby corporation yard, according to Lakeport Fire Chief Doug Hutchison.

The fast-moving fire headed toward the highway, with one spot jumping over it, resulting in blocked traffic. Law enforcement temporarily diverted traffic off the highway and through the city, based on witness reports.

Hutchison said the fire burned a total of two and a half acres, with one large spot on the west side of the highway.

He said pine trees on the east side of the highway had torched up, sending the fire over the roadway.

He said they had “shaky” containment around the fire within 45 minutes of dispatch, with firefighters containing it about a half hour later. Cal Fire's inmate crews helped make quick work of the fire, he said.

Hutchison said the fire burned primarily in the middle of an old walnut orchard. It damaged a structure that he said appeared to be old farmworker housing and destroyed a nearby pump house.

There also was a small homeless camp near the pine trees that burned, Hutchison said.

Two homeless adults were staying there, and their car – which had all of their belongings inside

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of it – burned up. Hutchison said they were not physically hurt and were referred to Red Cross for assistance.

Lakeport Fire and Cal Fire kept some units on scene for some time after the fire was fully contained as part of mop up operations, Hutchison said.

A witness told Lake County News that he saw heavy equipment working in the area shortly before the fire occurred.

However, Hutchison said he could not confirm a cause yet.

“The cause is still under investigation, officially,” he said, adding that investigators have some leads.

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