

Show Low Monthly News



Monthly

August 2002

www.ci.show-low.az.us

City employees join the battle against Arizona's largest wildfire

The Rodeo-Chediski Fire hit the White Mountains with colossal ferocity. Due to the severe drought conditions facing the state, officials had warned that this would be the worst fire season in recorded history. It was only a matter of time before a wildfire catastrophe would strike. And strike it did in June. Thankfully, due to the expertise of highly trained professionals and divine intervention, much of the area was spared the devastation inflicted on neighboring communities.

While Show Low citizens heeded the call to evacuate, issued June 22, a contingent of dedicated employees stayed to support the fire fighting and evacuation efforts. These selfless employees, whose heroic deeds in the face of danger largely went unnoticed, deserve everyone's gratitude.

Led by Mayor Gene Kelley and the City's interim management team, these employees provided a range of services. They protected homes from looters, checked areas for spot fires, fueled fire fighting aircraft, manned emergency telephone lines, operated heavy equipment alongside firefighters, picked up trash from citizens' homes when regular service was suspended, worked directly with members of the Incident Management Team, cooked for and fed the troops, dispatched emergency services, kept the water flowing for the firefighters, directed traffic, provided daily updates and wildfire footage through City 4 Television, turned water connections off and on, answered questions from anxious citizens, and kept Show Low Municipal Airport running 24 hours a day.

Every police officer and public works employee working for the City stayed to help. They were aided by police dispatchers, airport linemen, clerical personnel, City 4 TV staffers, employ-

ees from the engineering and planning and zoning departments, and members of middle and senior management.

Many of them faced the same discomforts as the evacuees and, in some cases, dealt with even worse conditions. For example, Airport Manager Dennis Wiss spent seven days in a



row at the airport, sleeping on a cot in his office. The police facility doubled as sleeping quarters and cafeteria, with employees taking turns catching a

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Rodeo-Chediski fire...continued from cover page

few winks. It also served as a makeshift command center, staffed by management personnel working 18-hour days. Senior managers, as well as police department and public works employees, met twice daily with the Incident Management Team before and during the evacuation.

Life in Show Low was turned upside down after the call came to evacuate. Many citizens aren't aware of what happened behind the scenes before and after they left the area.

Show Low Police Department

Show Low police administration personnel, police officers and dispatchers played a key role during the Rodeo-Chediski Fire. They worked hand-in-hand with the Incident Command Center set up at Show Low High School and the regional law enforcement command center located at the National Guard Armory. They established roadblocks and vehicle checkpoints and patrolled the streets to keep unauthorized personnel from entering restricted areas.

Evacuation and reentry procedures: Police officers took the lead in notifying residents of Show Low's possible evacuation beginning June 19. When the call came on June 22, a four-member team coordinated the evacuation to ensure it was organized and orderly. The entire City was evacuated in just four hours, and there were no accidents or injuries. The evacuation lasted for 6-1/2 days, during which there were no reports of burglaries or looting of any Show Low residence or business. Police department personnel also coordinated the reentry by citizens when the evacuation order was rescinded on June 29.

Staff resources: Employees of the police department worked a total of 3,457 hours over 20 consecutive days. Officers drove over 19,942 miles patrolling Show Low. Police administration personnel worked with over 400 news media representatives from around the world, including radio, print and 18 satellite television crews.

Public Works Department

June 19–20: Public works employees helped the police department and visited every household in Show Low, advising residents to be prepared to leave within an hour if necessary. Door hangars were left if residents weren't home.

June 20–July 9: The City supplied a forklift and two operators (who worked 12-hour shifts daily) to the Incident Command Center. The forklift and operators moved to Heber when the Show Low command center closed.

June 21: Crews loaded pickups with barricades, signs and cones in case the evacuation order was issued.

June 22: After Mayor Kelley and Show Low Police Chief Corder issued the evacuation order, employees again went door-to-door notifying residents to evacuate.

June 23: Crews helped police officers double-check on homeowners who didn't leave.

June 23–26: Waste Management employees had joined in the evacuation, so public works employees distributed garbage dispensers and dumpsters to various locations, including the command centers, fire department, police department and airport. They visited the sites regularly to dispose of the trash.

June 24–26: Employees operated City loaders (similar to bulldozers) to help construct a fire line from US60 to SR260 around Fairway Park and Torreon.

June 27: Crews spent the day moving polycarts they found in residents' front and side yards to the right-of-way for pickup by Waste Management employees on June 28.

June 28: Employees removed white towels and ribbons from homes that were evacuated to discourage vandalism.

June 29: About 40 customers left their hoses and sprinkler systems running during the evacuation, and service to these homes was shut off. Employees revisited these homes to turn water service back on.

In addition, crews filled ponds at Torreon out of the City's water tank for use as helicopter water dip sites. The City's four wells and three water tanks were changed from automatic to manual operation to ensure enough water was available for fire fighting efforts. During the evacuation, the City produced 2.1 million gallons of water per day, just 0.3 million gallons short of maximum production.

Crews built six four-by-eight-foot informational bulletin boards that were placed at strategic locations throughout the City and at the Command Center. They took care of disposing wastewater from the portable toilets set up at every site and unplugged the sewer at the high school when it malfunctioned.

Show Low Municipal Airport

Temporary flight restriction: The Federal Aviation Administration imposed a temporary flight restriction on June 23. This meant that the airport and the air space above the fire area were closed to all aircraft except for those used for fire fighting, law enforcement and ambulance services. The restriction was lifted July 2, and the airport reopened to all air traffic. In addition, the FAA and the Forest Service brought in air traffic controllers to handle flight operations.

Staff resources: From June 19 through June 29, the airport was manned 24 hours a day, compared to the usual 14 hours of operation. Beginning June 22, the airport manager and one lineman stayed continuously to assist in operating the airport.

Aircraft operations: Normally, there are an average of 500 to 600 landings and takeoffs each week. With the aerial fire fighting missions, landings and takeoffs totaled 2,012 from June 19 through July 2, or close to double the average.

Aircraft fuel: The airport received emergency fuel deliveries from June 19 through July 12 of 41,935 gallons. During this 24-day period, a total of 26,103 gallons were pumped, almost an 80% increase over the previous 49 days.

Sadly, 468,130 acres were consumed by the wildfire, over 420 structures were destroyed, and nearly one billion Ponderosa pine trees were burned. Over 25,000 people were evacuated. The Rodeo-Chediski Fire was declared a national disaster by President George W. Bush. It was the largest wildfire in Arizona history and the fourth largest in the U.S. to date. However, the devastation could have been far worse. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of so many individuals, no lives were lost fighting the fire or during the evacuation. And, the fire never reached the communities of Show Low, Lakeside and Pinetop.

Could your house survive on its own?

We who live in the White Mountains are blessed with cooler weather, clearer skies and an evergreen landscape, compared to our Valley friends. Many sections of the City are located in areas that are a continuation of the forest, known as the urban-wildland interface.

As we all learned firsthand through the Rodeo-Chediski Fire, residents who live in the "community forest" have a responsibility to keep their properties defensible against wildfires. The Forest Service works hard at thinning the national forest and setting prescribed burns, but homeowners have to do their part, too.

Creating a defensible space around a home doesn't mean it will turn into an ugly, bare landscape. It doesn't have to look bad to be fire safe. The goal is to create a landscape whose design and choice of plants offers the best fire protection while enhancing the property.

Fire safety should be a major consideration in landscape design because we live in a wildfire-prone area. Surround your house with things that are less likely to burn. Plant fire-resistant trees, shrubs, perennials and ground covers.

Three factors affect wildfire intensity: topography, weather and vegetation. Vegetation is the only component we can control. Through proper plant selection, placement and maintenance, we can reduce the possibility of ignition, lower fire intensity and reduce how quickly a fire spreads. Doing so will increase your home's survivability.

Plant selection is mainly determined by a plant's ability to reduce the wildfire threat. Other factors include appearance, the plant's ability to hold the soil in place and wildlife habitat value.

The traditional foundation planting of junipers is not a viable solution in fire safe landscaping. Minimize using evergreen shrubs and trees within 30 feet of a structure because junipers, other conifers and broadleaf evergreens contain oils, resins and waxes that make these plants burn with great intensity. Use ornamental grasses and berries sparingly because they can be highly

flammable.

Choose "fire smart" plants—low-growing plants with a high moisture content. Their stems and leaves are not resinous, oily or waxy. Deciduous trees are generally more fire-resistant than evergreens because they have a higher moisture content when in leaf, but a lower fuel volume when dormant.

Placement and maintenance of trees and shrubs are as important as actual plant selection. When planning tree placement, consider their size at maturity. Keep tree limbs at least 15 feet from chimneys, power lines and structures. Specimen trees can be used near a structure if they are pruned properly and well irrigated.

Isn't it better to create and maintain a beautiful, defensible space rather than lose a home and the surrounding landscape to wildfire?

Fire safe design reduces fuel loads and creates fuel breaks. Use driveways, lawns, walkways, patios, parking areas, areas with inorganic mulches, and fences made of nonflammable material, such as rock, brick or cement. Water features such as pools, ponds or streams are also good fuel breaks. Traditional fuel breaks are areas in which wildland vegetation has been thinned or replaced with less flammable plants. While bare ground is effective from a wildfire standpoint, it is not promoted as a fire safe element because of aesthetics and soil erosion.

A home on a brushy slope facing south or west will require more extensive fire safe landscape planning than a house on a flat lot with little vegetation around it. Boulders and rocks are fire-retardant design elements. Whether or not a site can be irrigated will greatly influence the location of hardscape (concrete, asphalt, wood decks, etc.), plant selection and placement. Other important consider-

ations are the direction of prevailing winds, seasonal weather, local fire history and the native vegetation surrounding the site.

The closest 30 feet around a structure will be the highest water use area. This is the area in which highly flammable fuels are kept to a minimum and plants are kept green throughout the fire season. Choose well-irrigated perennials and/or low-growing or non-woody deciduous plants. A lawn is soothing visually and is also practical as a wildfire safety feature. However, extensive areas of turfgrass may not be pleasing to everyone. Good alternatives are clover, ground covers and conservation grasses that are kept green through irrigation. Rock mulches

are a good choice. Patios, masonry or rock planters are excellent fuel breaks. Be creative with boulders, riprap, dry stream beds and sculptural inorganic elements.

Keep in mind that less is better. Simplify visual lines and groupings. A fire safe landscape lets plants and garden elements reveal their innate beauty by leaving space between plants and groups of plants. In this type of landscape,

the open spaces are more important than the plants.

Proper landscaping also includes removing dead trees and limbs, raking and disposing of pine needles and ground fuels (such as pine cones), and thinning out stands of trees.

Remember, fire safe landscaping maintenance is an ongoing process. Since pines drop their needles twice a year, raking should be done in the spring and fall. Dead limbs and trees also should be removed.

For more information about fire safe landscaping, call the Navajo County Cooperative Extension office at 532-6139 (Show Low) or 928-524-6271 (Holbrook).

Show Low Monthly News is produced by the City of Show Low, 200 West Cooley, Show Low, AZ 85901. Direct comments or questions to the City Clerk's office at 532-4060. For general information, call 532-4000. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Calendar of Events

Family Aquatic Center: 532-4130 ♦ Recreation: 532-4140 ♦ Public Library: 532-4070

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| <p>08/05 7 a.m., City Hall Conference Room
City Council Study Session</p> <p>08/05 Last day to pick up Summer Reading Program incentives, Public Library</p> <p>08/05 Fall Coed Volleyball League registration begins</p> <p>08/06 Council Chambers
6 p.m., Board of Adjustment Meeting
7 p.m., City Council Regular Meeting</p> <p>08/06 7–9 p.m. (fight crime and show your support of law enforcement efforts by turning on your porch lights)
19th Annual National Night Out</p> <p>08/10 FREE Concert in the Park, City Park
5:30 p.m., <i>Mary K</i>; 7 p.m., <i>Chuck Hall Band</i></p> <p>08/12 7:30 a.m., meet at Aquatic Center
Senior Healthy Hike</p> <p>08/12 Swimming Lessons (Session 4) begin, Aquatic Center (register from 07/12)</p> <p>08/13 7 p.m., Council Chambers
Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting</p> <p>08/14 1:30 p.m., Public Library (read "Six Feet of the Country")
Arizona Humanities Book Discussion Group</p> <p>08/16 5–9 p.m., Aquatic Center (food, games, fun!)
Luau (open to the public, children under 3 get in FREE)</p> <p>08/16 7:30–10 p.m., Aquatic Center (swim, dance, games)
Teen Jam Dance (ages 12+)</p> | <p>08/17 10 a.m.–noon (ages 5-8); 2–4 p.m. (ages 9+)
Soccer Clinic, Show Low Primary School Field (register at the field on the day of the clinic)</p> <p>08/19 7 a.m., City Hall Conference Room
City Council Study Session</p> <p>08/20 Council Chambers
5:15 p.m., City Council Special Policy Meeting
7 p.m., City Council Regular Meeting</p> <p>08/22 Registration ends for Shoot-Out in Show Low (men's softball tournament) – play 08/31 & 09/02</p> <p>08/23-08/24 White Mountain Storytelling Festival 2002 (FREE) (workshops: 1–2:30 p.m. & 3–4:30 p.m., Northland Pioneer College; performances: 1–2:30 p.m., 3–4:30 p.m. & 6:30–9 p.m., City Park, Senior Field)</p> <p>08/24 7th Annual Tri In The Pines
Register by 08/14 at Recreation office</p> <p>08/26 7:30 a.m., meet at Aquatic Center
Senior Healthy Hike</p> <p>08/26 2:45 p.m., Recreation conference room
Back to School Bingo</p> <p>08/27 7 p.m., Council Chambers
Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting</p> <p>08/31-09/02 Shoot-Out in Show Low (men's softball tournament)
Show Low City Park</p> |
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Check out City 4 Television and the City's Web site at www.ci.show-low.az.us for more information

Test your skills during annual Tri in the Pines

The seventh annual **Tri In The Pines** is set for Saturday, August 24, 2002. The popular triathlon in the White Mountains includes a 3.5-mile run in Show Low City Park, a 12.3-mile bicycle ride along City streets and an 825-yard swim at the indoor Family Aquatic Center. Race start times begin at 7 a.m. and are staggered approximately every 30 minutes.

The race is sanctioned by USA Triathlon and its rules will apply. All competitors must be current members of USA TRI or must purchase a one-day membership, which will be added to the entry fee.

Entrants will be grouped into age categories. Applications are being accepted through August 14 at the Recreation office at 1100 West Deuce of Clubs.

Competitors may participate in the entire three phases of the triathlon or opt to race a specific phase—running, bicycling or swimming—if on a relay team. Only those individuals or relay teams who complete all three

phases of the triathlon qualify for awards. The non-refundable entry fee for individual competitors is \$57 through August 14 (or \$50 with a current USA TRI card) and \$62 for late registrants (or \$55 with a current USA TRI card). Relay teams may register for \$87 per team by August 14 (or \$80 when all team members hold current USA TRI cards) or \$97 for late registrants (or \$90 when all team members hold current USA TRI cards). Entries received after the deadline will not be seeded.

All entrants registering before August 24 will receive a race T-shirt. Race packets will be available for pickup on Friday, August 23, from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. at the Aquatic Center. No race day registration will be accepted. Post-race festivities are planned, including race awards and raffle prizes.

Volunteers for the event are still needed. Interested volunteers may contact race coordinator Renée Higginbotham at the Recreation office at 532-4140.

