

Raging Fire Nearly Engulfs Franklinton

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All available fire apparatus within a 50 mile radius of Franklinton was called in to battle the roaring fire, which, at one time, seriously threatened the entire town of Franklinton.

The fire, which began about three miles west of Franklinton about noon, jumped a rural paved road running north from Wright's Store on highway 56 and, fanned by high winds, swept across tender-dry wood and farm lands eastward to U.S. Number 1 Highway.

Just as the flames jumped the main north-south traffic artery, a wind shift to the south caused the fire to spread with lightning like rapidity along the western town limits all the way to N.C. Highway 56.

During the height of the fire, flames swept across the busy U.S. 1 by-pass in Franklinton at several locations and into the Ramey Circle residential section where it set fire to three homes and burned woodland to the back door of a number of other houses.

Upwards of 40 pieces of fire and rescue apparatus was rushed in to the Franklinton area to assist beleaguered firefighters from Franklinton, Louisburg, Youngsville, Bunn, Centerville, Justice and Epsom, who, with the County Forest Fire Service, bore the brunt of the battle.

As darkness descended, Franklinton took on the appearance of a military camp as Governor Sanford ordered out units of the 5th Rocket Battalion, 113th Artillery, of the National Guard from Louisburg and Youngsville to control traffic in the emergency and lend a hand with the fire fighting.

Fire Permits Cancelled

The State Forest Service Thursday issued a special warning concerning hazardous fire conditions throughout the area.

State Forester F. H. Claridge, in issuing a cancellation order for all brush burning permits and all types of burning within 500 feet of any wooded area, stated that conditions were extremely critical.

Claridge's cancellation order also prohibits any burning after 4 P.M. even though a brush burning permit is not normally required during this period, County Forest Ranger J. A. Pearce said.

Director of the National Guard operation was Major Tom East, of Franklinton, the Battalion operations officer.

Russell Nicholson of the State Civil Defense Office in Raleigh rushed in to help Franklinton Fire Chief Milton House direct fire-fighting operations of units of fire departments from as far away as Rocky Mount and Apex.

Out in the country, at least four houses, all believed unoccupied, burned as well as three barns and numerous other small farm outbuildings. Three of the destroyed houses were on the Fred Cooke farm west of Franklinton and the other house and three barns were located on the John Wright farm.

So dense was the smoke in the area that motorists were forced to drive with their headlights on.



Residents Pack Belongings In Car



Smoke Proves Too Much For Motorist Above