

Fire on Santa Fe Trail Ranch 6/7/2018

It was a near miss today for SFTR. Several significant factors conspired to produce a very favorable outcome to a potentially catastrophic event.....

As rain showers began to form in the early afternoon, an occasional rumble of thunder could be heard. Because of the possibility of lightning in her area, part-time resident Lisa Lewis was on her deck watching for nearby strikes. A strike a mile or so from her house produced smoke within a minute or two. A quick call to a neighbor provided reassurance: "hang up



with me and call 911" which she quickly did. Lisa's subsequent calls to neighbors resulted in an immediate response by John Noard who drove his ATV off-road in the direction Lisa indicated.

Mary Ghormley made additional phone calls and radioed messages as needed. John already had a mounted weed sprayer full of water, and was able to get to the fire quickly,

probably arriving within 10 or 15 minutes of the strike.

Winds were very light, so the area aflame was only about six feet in diameter but



spreading. John stopped the fire's growth as reinforcements were enroute.



RC Ghormley arrived via the neighborhood G2T fire access trail, being followed in by Pat and Shannon Younquist on their UTV with firefighting tools. RC's fire



trailer with 100 gallons of water plus pump was immediately put into action as Shannon watered down the area further while Pat stirred the charred duff to ensure no live coals remained.

Steve and Sheryl Smith arrived in their UTV with a chain saw which was used to drop the tree with the fresh lightning strike.



Rodney Brubaker soaked the tree to ensure no smoldering embers remained. Lisa reported via radio that a Fisher Peak Fire Protection District brush truck had arrived on the



ranch, piloted by the indomitable Tim Guenthard.



Rodney and RC drove out the G2T trailhead at Timber Park and led the brush truck down the G2T firefighting access trail to the fire site. Tim was most appreciative of the established firefighting access trail and the previous continuing mitigation

that made the fire site easy to access and kept the fire's spread minimal. Tim pronounced the fire out due to the neighborhood effort and declared it was safe for all to depart. The exit route away from the fire site followed the remaining portion of the G2T fire access trail up to Fawn Ct.

What saved the day:

- Light winds.
- Neighborhood vigilance and immediate communication (Good show, Lisa!).
- Easy access via a neighborhood trail, previously established and continually maintained for just such a purpose.
- Previous mitigation of the area and continual mitigation upkeep.
- Willingness and cooperation among neighbors to pay for establishment and maintenance of a trail accessible by firefighting vehicles.

What's the take-away?

- First and foremost, call 911 immediately anytime a fire or smoke is seen. With the current LA County fire restrictions, no open outdoor flames of any kind are allowed, so an immediate 911 call is warranted no matter what the source of the flame (even if it's a campfire).
- Look for easy access paths or existing (but neglected???) jeep trails that can be restored to support firefighting access. By truck is best, by ATV is OK, and by foot if no other way.
- Know your neighbors and know who has visibility in what directions. Communicate during lightning activity.
- Mitigate! Remove or mulch brush. Reduce tree density. Limb up the lower 10 ft of trees to remove ladder fuels. Make it harder for fire to propagate, and remove fuels to reduce the intensity of any fire that may start.
- Have water and rudimentary firefighting tools on a vehicle ready to go.
- Response times for FPPFD will vary depending on other fires. Tim mentioned that we were call number eight that day for FPPFD. Neighborhood efforts can augment the professionals' response.
- Consider contributing to the Fishers Peak Fire Protection District. As a volunteer organization, donations from each of us can improve their equipment and thus the service they can provide to SFTR.
<http://www.fisherspeakfire.com/donations.html>