

# Blazes light up county

## Firemen busy dousing fires in early July

By CAROLYN PLOTTS

Last week proved to be a busy time for members of the Norton Rural Fire Department as blazes broke out almost faster than they could respond.

Starting Monday, firefighters responded to a fire in a stubble field south of Norton on the Warren Harting farm.

The cause was suspected to be the exhaust system on a pickup truck driven into the field. The truck was driven out of the field and into a ditch where it burned and was a total loss.

Thursday at 2 p.m., a call came in of a hay fire on the Dwight Sprigg farmstead.

First estimates were that 100 large, round bales of first-cutting hay had spontaneously combusted. Later, it was learned that 200 bales of hay were involved with an estimated value of \$10,000. A dozen cedar trees in an established windbreak north of the Sprigg's home were also lost. Acting Fire Chief, Ed Witt, said it was hard to put a price on a tree.

"With the conditions we had, I think our firemen did a real good job," Chief Witt said. "We sure want to thank everyone who helped; the farmers and neighbors; the ambulance crew and Kathy Holste for bringing out sandwiches. There was just a lot of cooperation. I can't thank the county enough. Their Caterpillar operator, Topper Cook, was...well, he's good. I don't know how he did it, the smoke was so thick I know he couldn't see. He was guided by radio a lot of time."

Chief Witt said the wind was out of the northeast, which made fighting the fire difficult. He said Mr. Cook, eventually, took his Caterpillar, equipped with a dozer blade and made a trench. Firemen flooded the trench, then pushed some of the bales in and buried them.

Almena's Rural Fire Department answered the call for assistance and brought a firetruck with a high-pressure jet sprayer, a 2,000 gallon portable water tank and a pump.

Norton's Rural Fire Department had a 1,200 gallon portable tank too. This enabled the tanker to dump water and quickly return to Norton where they could refill at the hydrant at Prairie Land Electric.

It would eventually take until almost 10 p.m. before the last embers were extinguished and the firemen could leave the site.

But, there wasn't much rest for the weary because Friday brought another round of fires. Early afternoon, the first call came in of a fire just south of the Kansas/Nebraska state line and 7 1/2 miles west. A stubble field and some pasture land belonging to the Ahlmeyer family were on fire. It is not known what started this blaze, Chief Witt said.

While a tanker truck and one pumper were busy with that fire, another call came in from the Glenn Schulze property about four miles west and six miles north of Norton.

Chief Witt called for Wilsonville and Beaver City rural fire departments to help on the Ahlmeyer fire and do mop-up work, so he and his crew could go help with the Schulze blaze.

An 860 Massey Ferguson combine was cited as the cause of the Schulze fire. The combine with a full bin load was a total loss and on-site estimates were that about 50 acres of stubble and pasture were burned.

At one point, with winds blowing from the south, the fire jumped the road and began to burn conservation reserve services ground belonging to Dean Sprigg. His son, David Sprigg, brought in a tractor and disc and stopped the



Firemen, neighbors and friends worked to move hay bales in the early stages of a hay fire Thursday at the Dwight Sprigg homestead.

fire's spread to the north while a fire department pumper put out fires to the south.

A tanker and a pumper from Decatur County Rural Fire Department responded to lend their help.

Later that day at 7 p.m., another hay bale fire was reported at Sumner Farms, north and west of Reager. The trucks were rolling when the owner called back to say the fire was out and the trucks were called back.

Saturday turned out to be a relief day with no fires. But, by Sunday the vacation was over with lightning strikes igniting five more blazes in the county. Three were handled by Norton Rural firemen and two by the Lenora Rural Fire Department.

The first fire, six miles west and three miles south to the Lenora road was called in and one truck was paged at 8:45 a.m.

The next call, at 8:57 a.m., reported a fire six miles west and two and a half miles north of Norton. Three trucks went to that fire.

At 9:06 a.m. Steve Mathes, Prairie Dog state park manager reported seeing smoke about four miles south and three and a half miles west of Norton, so another truck was dispatched there.

Another call at 9:06 a.m. came in to the fire department. Directions said it was ten miles south and an eighth of a mile west. Local farmers, John Becker and Rod Walgren, managed to put out the fire with a tractor and disc. A fire truck was headed that way, but was called back to check on the one reported by Steve Mathes.



A combine on the Glenn Schulze farm, northwest of Norton, caught fire Friday afternoon, igniting a stubble

field. Moments later its tank of diesel fuel exploded.

— Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts

At the same time crews were answering these calls, another came in from 11 miles south and eight miles west of town near a hog farm on Renner property. Terry Peterson, fire chief from Lenora, and his crew handled that one.

While fighting that fire, another call to Lenora came for a hay bale fire, 14 miles south, one and a half mile east and one back south.

At 9:10 p.m. Monday night there was yet another fire. This one was in a wheatfield adjacent to KQNK Radio Station on the east side. All units re-

sponded and the blaze was extinguished in minutes. John Gilgenbach, a neighbor used his tractor and blade to prevent the fire from spreading further into the wheatfield.

Fireworks were determined to be the cause of that blaze.

Chief Witt, who was in charge of the department while Fire Chief Steve Otter was out-of-town with the Norton BB Gun team, said, "We didn't have any fires in the second quarter. But, we sure made up for it in the first part of the third quarter."

### Cardinal Bar and Grill



Main Street, Norcatour~785-693-4499

Friday, July 8: All You Can Eat Chicken Fried Steak Buffet

Karaoke at 9 p.m.

Sat., July 9: Smothered Pork Chops

[ORDER OFF MENU ANYTIME]

HOURS: Mon.-Thurs. 7 a.m.-10 p.m.; Fri.-Sat. 7 a.m.-Midnight



## Moffet Drug Store

*We Appreciate Your Loyalty to Our Locally Owned Business!*

**Wed., July 6—In Store,**

**10% off Prescriptions**

**Thurs., July 7—20% off all Gifts**

**Fri., July 8—Drinks and Cookies on us!**

*Purchase 2 Hallmark Cards/Get One Free*

**DOOR PRIZES DAILY**

*Thank You for being Our Customer*

## Moffet Drug Store

102 South State, Norton, Kansas — Phone 785-877-2721

**TOLL FREE — 1-800-810-2721**

## Open House

**Tuesday, July 12, 2005**

At 113 N. Norton — Norton, Kansas

JUST SOUTH OF NEX-TECH IN NORTON

*Enjoy Refreshments*

Guess the Ice Melt Down Time for Prizes!

*Socialize with Friends*



Kathy Zimmerman

Jane Gilliam

785-877-2236

www.waddell.com

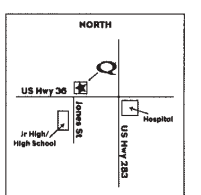
## WE KEEP OUR OVEN ON.

**(SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO.)**



MMMM...TOASTY!

**\$1 OFF**  
any regular or large sub.



411 W. Holme - W. Hwy 36  
Norton, KS 67654  
P: 785-877-2808  
F: 785-877-2055

Expires: 08/01/05

Not valid on the Real Deal or Choose 2 menus, limited time offers, or delivery orders. This original coupon must be surrendered when ordering. Limit one coupon per order. May not be combined with any other offer or coupon. Taxes not included. No cash value (unless prohibited by law, then cash value is \$0.05). Value of promotional item(s) varies by location. No substitutions. Void if copied or transferred and where prohibited. Valid at this location only.

