



## Wildfires burn homes in Colorado

By Thomas Peipert  
The Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS (AP) — A wildfire near Colorado Springs may have consumed as many as 100 homes today, and the sheriff fears some residents who stayed behind might have died. Authorities initially estimated that between 40 and 60 houses were destroyed in Black Forest, a heavily wooded residential area northeast of Colorado Springs, but they are still surveying the damage. El Paso County Sheriff Terry Maketa said he believes around 80 have been lost and he wouldn't be surprised if the figure reaches or tops 100.

Maketa said there are no reports of anyone missing in the fire, however he fears for those who ignored evacuation orders and stay behind. "One of my worst fears," he said, "is that people took their chances and it may have cost them their life."

Maketa said gusty winds expected later in the day could cause the fire to spread unpredictably. The fire was one of several that broke out along Colorado's Front Range on Tuesday and quickly spread in high winds and record heat. The fire has burned about 12 square miles and forced the evacuation of more than 7,000 people

in an area over 47 square miles. The area is not far from last summer's devastating Waldo Canyon fire that destroyed 346 homes and killed two.

"Everywhere you looked," Maketa said, "you saw scattered fires, almost like there was a huge convention of campfires everywhere, and periodically you'd see trees just pop into a fireball."

Wildfires were also burning in New Mexico and California, where a smokejumper was killed fighting one of dozens of lightning-sparked fires. Luke Sheehy, Susanville, Calif., was fatally injured by part of a falling tree in Modoc National Forest.

In Colorado, about 60 miles to the southwest of the Black Forest Fire, a 6-square-mile wildfire near Royal Gorge Bridge Park remained totally uncontained this morning, but winds were pushing the fire away from Cañon City and structures.

The Royal Gorge fire has destroyed three structures near Cañon City, but the soaring suspension bridge spanning a canyon across the Arkansas River appeared undamaged.

The bridge has wood planking but is suspended by steel supports. It's normally a tourist attraction but firefighters are now using it to

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KAREN KRIEN/Saint Francis Herald

This plane had to be lifted off a county road near St. Francis after its engine died and the pilot could not quite get to the airport there Tuesday morning.

## All airplanes, stay in the right lane

A pilot had to use a county road as a landing strip Tuesday morning when the motor on his plane quit near the St. Francis airport.

The Kansas Highway Patrol reported the engine of Ricky Rue Rogers's single-engine Mustang failed about 9:20 a.m. Tuesday. Karen Krien, publisher of *The Saint Francis Herald*, said that Rogers, 65, St. Francis, is an experienced pilot who decided he could not get the plane all the way to the landing strip.

She said he set the plane down on County Road 16, about two miles southeast of the Cheyenne County Municipal Airport south

of St. Francis.

The plane appeared to be a World War II P-51 Mustang fighter plane or a replica, although its registration was dated 2012. The emergency landing crumpled the right wing of the plane next to the engine and tore two of the blades off the propeller. It had to be picked up with a crane and loaded on a truck before Rogers could get it back home. The patrol reported he was wearing his seatbelt and was not hurt.

## Road plan criticized

By Sam Dieter  
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A public comment session for future road improvements on the south side of town brought a strong reaction Friday from those who have to bring large equipment to town and others who thought more people need to see the plans before anything is final.

The meeting for a survey organized between the city, Thomas County and the Kansas Department of Transportation drew about 30 people to the Law Enforcement Training Center on Franklin Avenue downtown Friday morning, including public officials and citizens. A comment form was available for people who attended.

Representatives of the consulting firm Kirkham Michael presented a plan to improve highways that pass through Colby in the coming years, particularly Country Club Drive and Range Avenue from College Drive south to Interstate 70, but faced a hard sell when presenting their plans. Many at the meeting said more people here need to see the plans before a final information session at the end of this summer.

"This isn't a snapshot or a construction project," said Sorin Juster of Kirkham Michael. "It's looking into the future."

He added that his firm studied the volume of traffic through intersections on those roads. Nick Gordon, a transportation engineer with the firm, showed the proposed improvements.

He suggested alternately widening or narrowing some roads. South Range between Interstate 70 and Davis, he said, could have a raised median in the center that would stop people from making left turns across or onto the highway, or the road could be narrowed to take out the open median that exists today. Some of the side streets could be extended for cars to get around the part of the street that would be closed off by the median, Gordon said, or an access point could be added to Range from the frontage road near Sonic or Dollar General. A median could be added north of Davis, or on Davis leading into Range.

The firm suggested roundabouts at south Range or Country Club and Willow. At Country Club and Fourth, even though that was not part of the study area, Gordon suggested turning Fourth into a three-

lane road to provide a turning lane for Country Club, or re-aligning Country Club to meet Fourth at a right angle, giving drivers a better view of cross traffic.

The audience was not enthusiastic about adding features that could make it harder to turn on city streets.

"What a mess," area resident Ross Rodenbeck said after the presentation.

Rodenbeck could be heard before the meeting saying he hoped the plan did not include roundabouts, and afterward said the Kirkham Michael people "should try getting a piece of equipment through them."

"These roundabouts, have you ever been on big machinery?" he asked.

People need to get their machines to and from implement dealers and mechanics in town, he said.

"That's a real problem," he said. "It's hard to get them into town now."

Gordon responded that properly designed roundabouts included margins of pavement on the inside of the circle to allow trucks

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TRACEY GALLI/Sons of the American Legion

The Sons of the American Legion placed flags for the Avenue of Flags display on Memorial Day. The group plans to place these flags on five holidays this year.

## Sons of American Legion seek support for Flag Day display

The Sons of the American Legion need sponsors to help them display 100 American flags along South Range Avenue in Colby on six holidays each year — including Flag Day on Friday — to honor veterans with the Hometown Heroes Avenue of Flags.

Project coordinator Tracey Galli said the group is displaying flags along Range, the main entrance to Colby, because they thought it would look impressive from the Interstate. He said the group had to obtain permission from the state Department of Transportation and the group's insurance company before the flags could be installed.

The flags also are being displayed on Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Patriot Day and Veterans Day, weather permitting.

Individuals or organizations can sponsor a flag for \$50 per year and can dedicate it in honor or in memory of someone who served in the armed forces. Sponsors will be recognized twice annually in the *Colby Free Press*.

"This is a way to honor the guys who are serving now and that have served in the past," said Galli, adding that proceeds will help support veterans, youth and community projects.

The Sons provides help to other organizations, including Genesis-Thomas County food bank, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Special Olympics, the Fisher House and the Child Welfare Foundation, he said. The group has helped with the South Franklin Park walking trail and sent World War II veterans to Washington.

To sponsor a flag, contact Galli at 462-0450 or complete the form in today's paper.

## County apologizes for mistake

By Heather Alwin  
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Thomas County commissioners apologized for what they called "processing mistakes" that led to noxious-weed bills being prematurely added to the tax rolls.

Commissioners had voted to include five overdue bills on the tax rolls although the property owners had been sent notices that gave them until June 15 to pay.

Stephen and Tracy Shull and Victor and Brenda Mazanec, property owners whose bills were added to the tax rolls, have already paid their bills, said

Clair Schrock, road and noxious weed department director. Stephen Shull paid his bill even before the commissioners voted on the issue.

"We need to apologize to people whose names were inadvertently published," said Schrock at the commissioners' meeting May 31.

Commissioner Mike Baughn apologized directly to Shull, who attended the commissioners' meeting Monday.

"We're sure sorry that happened," he said.

Baughn suggested changing procedures so this type of miscommunication does not happen again. He said the commissioners assumed all collection efforts were made before the bills were presented to them for inclusion on the tax rolls.

