

Wildfire blocking Yellowstone entrance smolders on

August 28 2016, by Brennan Linsley



Firefighter Katrina Jongenelen, of California's Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Fire Module, helps mop up the smoking burn area of the Berry Fire near the road to Yellowstone in Grand Teton National Park, Wyo., Saturday, Aug 27, 2016. The south entrance to Yellowstone National Park is expected to remain closed for a few days due to the wildfire in Grand Teton, where firefighters are trying to clean up hotspots and burned trees along a stretch of roadway. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)

Firefighters chopped down trees and searched for hotspots on steep

hillsides Sunday as they battled a wildfire that has blocked an entrance to Yellowstone National Park.

Wildfire managers said their top priority is clearing a highway that leads to Yellowstone and protecting campgrounds, buildings and archaeological sites. They also are making sure there are no flare-ups or falling trees that could cause injuries or death.

Strong winds blew down several trees Saturday, blocking some roadways. Travelers have been warned to be cautious on roads around the park that remain open.

The fire that began last month in neighboring Grand Teton National Park is blocking Yellowstone's south entrance, near the resort town of Jackson. Yellowstone also has entrance stations near Cody and in Montana.

Joel Dugger, who is with a wildfire crew based near Redding, California, said he and six other firefighters have been working for 10 days to corral the Grand Teton fire and keep it contained.

"That way we won't have a potential re-burn through these areas that are green," he said, pointing to nearby fir trees on a mountainside that have so far withstood intense heat and embers.

Surrounded by swirling smoke from burning logs that were chopped up with chain saws and axes, Dugger said there have been long days on the fire lines, and firefighters sleep in tents at night.



Firefighter Katrina Jongenelen, of California's Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Fire Module, works in the smoking burn area of the Berry Fire during a mop up near the road to Yellowstone in Grand Teton National Park, Wyo., Saturday, Aug 27, 2016. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)

"We survive in the backcountry. We're self-sufficient a week at a time," he said.

Wildfire managers are letting the fire continue to burn on Jackson Lake's west side, where no buildings or people are threatened.

Linda Burroughs, a visitor from Russell, Pennsylvania, who is traveling with a group of senior citizens, said wildfire cut short their planned two-day visit to Yellowstone National Park. They had to take a four-hour detour to get to their Jackson Lake lodge, south of the Grand Teton fire.

"We see the smoke off and on," she said, but so far, the fire isn't threatening tourists at the lodge.



Firefighters mop up the smoking burn area of the Berry Fire near the road to Yellowstone in Grand Teton National Park, Wyo., Saturday, Aug 27, 2016. The south entrance to Yellowstone National Park is expected to remain closed for a few days due to the wildfire in Grand Teton, where firefighters are trying to clean up hotspots and burned trees along a stretch of roadway. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)

With the highway blocked, visitors in Grand Teton who want to go to Yellowstone have to drive into Idaho and Montana to the west entrance. Fire officials said the road might reopen as early as Tuesday.

Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks and Bridger Teton National Forest all have area closures in effect, but both national parks are open

to visitors.

Officials in Yellowstone National Park said Sunday a 49-square-mile fire that started Aug. 8 has not crossed the West Entrance road, which remains open. They said if the fire flares up or smoke gets too dense, visitors in vehicles might have to be escorted through the area.

Fire crews have begun working on a fuel break on the park's western boundary to help reduce the risk of wildfire for the community of West Yellowstone, Montana, which is about 4 miles from the [fire](#).



Firefighter Austin Edwards, of California's Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Fire Module, stands in the smoking burn area of the Berry Fire during a mop up near the road to Yellowstone in Grand Teton National Park, Wyo., Saturday, Aug 27, 2016. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)



Firefighter Austin Edwards, of California's Whiskeytown National Recreation Area Fire Module, works in the smoking burn area of the Berry Fire during a mop up near the road to Yellowstone in Grand Teton National Park, Wyo., Saturday, Aug 27, 2016. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)



A firefighter helps mop up the smoking burn area of the Berry Fire near the road to Yellowstone in Grand Teton National Park, Wyo., Saturday, Aug 27, 2016. The south entrance to Yellowstone National Park is expected to remain closed for a few days due to the wildfire in Grand Teton, where firefighters are trying to clean up hot spots and burned trees along a stretch of roadway. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)

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