Arson suspected as wildfire burns in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, rangers say

November 24 2023, by Mark Price, The Charlotte Observer

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A wildfire burning in Great Smoky Mountains National Park is believed to be the work of an arsonist, according to the National Park Service.

The blaze is currently 100% contained to about 6 acres of "steep, rugged terrain" in the Rich Mountain area, the National Park Service reports. The fire is on the Tennessee side of the park, which straddles the Tennessee-North Carolina state line.

Investigators say someone set two fires in the area Nov. 20, and flames were spotted around 2:30 p.m.

"The fires were started under high wind conditions, a red flag warning and a park-wide burn ban," park officials said. "The fire prompted an early-morning voluntary evacuation of homes near the park boundary on Nov. 21."

A white truck was seen near the Rich Mountain trailhead around 10 a.m. Nov. 20, officials said.

"This vehicle may not be involved in the incident, but the occupants may have seen something and have information that can assist the investigation," park officials say.

Intentionally setting fires outside designated rings in camping or picnic areas "is always illegal and is extremely dangerous," park officials said.

More than 30 firefighters have worked to control the Rich Mountain Fire and will "continue to mop up the fire and will monitor it through the Thanksgiving holiday period," officials said.

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Citation: Arson suspected as wildfire burns in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, rangers say (2023, November 24) retrieved 29 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2023-11-arson-wildfire-great-smoky-mountains.html

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