



Media Alerts
Fire on U.S. Highway 17 North
March 23-25, 2011

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2011

Date: Wed 3/23/2011 5:14 PM

Subject: Voluntary Evacuation for Wildland Fire

TO MEDIA:

As you may already know, a brush fire has crossed into Charleston County from Georgetown County at South Santee. The fire is not contained at this point in time, and is present on both sides of Highway 17 South.

Charleston County's Awendaw Fire Department (AFD) has responded to the South Santee area. Fire Departments from Mount Pleasant, Isle of Palms and North Charleston are assisting in covering the AFD coverage area. Charleston County's Emergency Management Department is responding to the scene to assist with supporting fire coordination. Highway 17 is shut down from Georgetown County to Highway 45.

Charleston County is in the process of conducting a reverse 9-1-1 call to alert residents of a voluntary evacuation over a six-mile area (about half of the area is in Georgetown County).

Media can help us by getting the word out about this voluntary evacuation.

We will keep you posted when more news is available.

Thank you,
Jennie Flinn
Charleston County Public Information Officer

Date: Wed 3/23/2011 7:16 PM
Subject: Update on Fire

TO MEDIA:

Here is some more information we have confirmed regarding the fire:

- According to Incident Command on scene, 1,100 acres have been affected thus far due to the wildfire.
- Charleston County Consolidated 9-1-1 Center is getting ready to do reverse 9-1-1 for a voluntary evacuation for Germantown.
- As coordinated by the American Red Cross, St. James Santee School will serve as the shelter location for those affected by the fire and needing to evacuate. Due to fire involving local telephone service provider TDS, reverse 911 was not entirely effective. Charleston County Volunteer Rescue Squad is going door-to-door to notify citizens in addition to media assistance.
- Charleston County's Consolidated 9-1-1 Dispatch Center is not aware of any injuries at this point in time.
- U.S. 17 North is being cut off at Highway 45 to traffic.
- Agencies involved/assisting are:
 - Charleston County:
 - Awendaw Fire Department
 - Emergency Management Department
 - Sheriff's Office
 - Volunteer Rescue
 - American Red Cross
 - Berkeley County Fire
 - City of Charleston Fire
 - Coastal Crisis Chaplaincy
 - Federal, State and Local Forestry
 - Georgetown County Fire
 - Isle of Palms
 - James Island Fire
 - Mount Pleasant Fire and Police
 - Myrtle Beach Public Safety
 - North Charleston Fire
 - St. Andrews Fire
 - St. John's Fire
 - Shulerville Fire
 - Sullivan's Island Fire

Date: Wed 3/23/2011 9:55 PM

Subject: Update on fire - stabilized, no injuries, etc.

TO MEDIA:

Here is some new information we have confirmed regarding the fire:

- The fires have been stabilized
- Highway 17N remains closed
- The shelter at St. James Santee Elementary remains open
- Voluntary evacuations remain in effect for South Santee and Germantown residents.
- Transportation resources are standing by for residents in need of assistance with evacuation, and Charleston County's Volunteer Fire & Rescue Squad continues to assist with door-to-door notification of the voluntary evacuation.
- The Salvation Army set up a canteen at the on-scene command post in support of responding public safety personnel.
- There are still no injuries reported.
- Some new agencies have been added to the below list of those involved/assisting:
 - Charleston County Government:
 - Awendaw Fire Department
 - Emergency Management Department
 - EMS
 - Sheriff's Office
 - Volunteer Fire & Rescue Squad
 - Alvin Fire
 - American Red Cross
 - Berkeley County Fire
 - Bonneau (Berkeley County)
 - City of Charleston Fire
 - Coastal Crisis Chaplaincy
 - Forestry: federal, state and local
 - Georgetown County Fire
 - Isle of Palms
 - James Island Fire
 - Jamestown Fire
 - Lake Moultrie Fire
 - Macadonia (Berkeley County)
 - Mount Pleasant Fire and Police
 - Myrtle Beach Public Safety
 - North Charleston Fire
 - Santee Circle Fire
 - St. Andrews Fire
 - St. John's Fire
 - Shulerville Fire
 - Sullivan's Island Fire
 - Summerville Fire
 - Whitesville Fire

Date: Wed 3/23/2011 10:35 PM

Subject: Last fire update

TO MEDIA:

This will be the last update tonight, and we wanted to make sure you got something for the 11 p.m. news.

Here is the latest information:

- We are pleased to say that the fires are contained, however, fire crews will remain in the area to make sure they don't start up again throughout the night.
- The volunteer evacuation shelter will close at 11 p.m. tonight, releasing people to return home.
- Highway 17 North remains closed until further notice.

Thank you,

Jennie Flinn

Charleston County Public Information Officer

THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2011

Date: Thu 3/24/2011 8:12 AM

Subject: Fire update Thursday morning - U.S. 17 reopened

TO MEDIA:

Here is some new information for you this morning:

- Charleston County's Consolidated 9-1-1 Center has received official word that Highway 17 North is now open.
- According to Awendaw Fire Department Battalion Chief Bo Bowers, who is currently the Incident Commander on scene:
 - The key function is to secure everything, as fires are approx 98% contained, monitoring and keeping out hot spots.
 - Many agencies are assisting with a plan to go to the South Santee area to secure a wet line 50 feet from the road(s) near the houses that were threatened (a wet line is an area that is physically soaked to prevent fire from crossing).
 - At 9 a.m. this morning, they are expecting 9 fire engines from the State Forestry Commission to help make sure all hot spots are out.
 - There are 3 brush trucks from 3 different agencies on Old Georgetown Highway assisting the State Forestry Commission.
 - Affected acreage estimate is still 1,1100

We will keep you posted as new/confirmed information becomes available.

Thank you,

Jennie Flinn

Charleston County Public Information Officer

Date: Thu, 24 Mar 2011 18:04:07 -0400

Subject: Fire update Thursday evening - 2,500 acres affected

TO MEDIA:

We do not expect to have additional news this evening, so here is a wrap-up for today:

- According to Awendaw Fire Department's Battalion Chief Bo Bowers, who has been the Incident Commander on scene today (until Chief David Lombardi relieved him):
 - Everyone has been working together -- approximately 98 fire trucks assisted Wednesday night from numerous agencies assisting with the situation.
 - Earlier today, the Sheriff's Office helicopter assisted with a flyover to assess the damage and make sure the fire was contained and the wet lines were holding.
 - Later on in the day, the U.S. Coast Guard assisted (due to high wind gusts that were up to 37 mph, in which they can fly).
 - Based on the flyovers, it has been determined that 2,500 acres have been affected by the wildfire.
 - Currently (6 p.m. Thursday), fire personnel are getting ready to move the Command Post to the Awendaw Fire Station so they can have a Unified Command (joint-agency) along with the State Forestry Commission.
 - Once there, they will regroup, anticipate the needs for tomorrow and then let the staff know who needs to return in the morning, make sure trucks are fueled up, then demobilize for the evening in order to let the shift go home for the night.
 - Fire and emergency personnel will continue to monitor the situation throughout tonight.

Date: Thu 3/24/2011 9:36 PM

Subject: NEW fire info: 6 miles of US17 to shut down at midnight due to poor visibility

TO MEDIA:

The following is an update from Awendaw Fire Department's Battalion Chief Bo Bowers, who is currently the Incident Commander on scene to manage the wildfire (please note that this information covers only the area of Charleston County, and the media needs to check with Georgetown County regarding any updates for their portion of the area):

- At midnight tonight, six miles of U.S. Highway 17, between the northernmost intersection of River Road and the Georgetown County line, will be shut down until approximately 7:30 a.m. Friday morning.
- Due to weather conditions, remaining smoke sitting low to the road is expected to cause extremely low visibility overnight, and the road is being shut down as a precaution to ensure that fire personnel can safely monitor the area on the ground throughout the night.
- At 6 a.m. Friday morning, incident command staff will begin conducting a reassessment of the area in order to determine what time the road can be opened to traffic.

We will let you know something as soon as a decision has been made.

FRIDAY, MARCH 25, 2011

Date: Friday, March 25, 2011 6:57 AM

Subject: Fire update: US 17 is now open to traffic

TO MEDIA:

The following is an update from Awendaw Fire Department's Battalion Chief Bo Bowers, who is currently the Incident Commander on scene to manage the wildfire:

- U.S. Highway 17 is now open to traffic.
- A six-mile portion of the road was closed at midnight due to low visibility, but an assessment this morning determined that the road could be opened.
- Today, fire personnel will be working to put wet lines throughout the affected area to ensure that the fire remains contained.

Please note that this information covers only the area of Charleston County, and the media needs to check with Georgetown County regarding any updates for their portion of the area