



VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT OF BIG ELK
42 Willow Drive Lyons CO 80540-8000
Phone 303-823-5717

To our neighbors of Big Elk Meadows: We, the members of your Volunteer Fire Department of Big Elk wanted to take the time to give you a breakdown of what the fire department's responses and actions were during the Kruger Rock Fire, 16 Nov through 20 Nov 2021.

*First, this is the second time in a 13-month period of time that Big Elk has almost been hit by a fast-moving wildfire. Is your house ready? If not, contact your Firewise representative to do a "walk-around" around your home and property to evaluate and recommend to you what needs to be done to get your house ready for a wildfire. <http://www.vfdofbigelk.org/firewise>

*Second, here is a breakdown of the KRUGER ROCK FIRE, TIMELINE AND EVENTS:

**0650hrs - A small wildfire was reported near Little Valley Road and Fish Creek Road southeast of Estes Park. Multiple resources responded and found the fire burning in very steep terrain. Gusting winds and low relative humidity caused the fire to spread quickly and threatened several structures in the area. Fire units on scene reported heavy fire activity and immediately started ordering additional resources and mandatory evacuations.

**0807hrs - VFD of BE Fire Chief Collin Isenhardt sent out a text message and email to our Command Staff informing us of the fire that was coming towards The Big Elk Meadow valley. **0930hrs - Trigger points were reached. Chief Isenhardt activated the community siren to alert the community of the threat. Trigger points are not decision-makers but serve as predetermined cues to prompt you to re-evaluate the current and potential situation and its associated risks.

**0942hrs - Boulder County Dispatch paged VFD of Big Elk members to respond to the fire station to get ready for a fast-moving wildfire, and to help with voluntary evacuations of the Big Elk Meadows community.

**0950hrs - Firefighters started to arrive at the station for planning and assignments.

**1000hrs - We had 17 volunteer firefighters at the station, most of them left their paying jobs to come and help fight this fire.

**We had a meeting with Chief Isenhardt, got multiple plans in place, and immediately started going around the Meadows, house to house, evaluating what houses had the best chance of being saved and which ones needed some work. We were following in the wake of the Sheriff's Deputies (both Larimer and Boulder Counties), who were knocking on doors to notify people of the voluntary evacuation. If you have questions about the flagging or set of flagging on your property, please contact our Firewise officer.

**1142hrs - While we were triaging homes and property, helping around the Meadows with the evacuation, the evacuation level rose to mandatory evacuation. This means Immediate Danger, and people should not delay to get out. Firefighters stopped doing triage evaluations around homes and property, and moved to sounding their sirens and PA systems, making sure residents got out safely. It took two sets of teams about 12 to 15 minutes to tour the entire Meadows sounding our sirens.

**1200hrs - Chief Isenhardt called us into the station for another meeting. This meeting was a risk/ benefit meeting where Chief Isenhardt asked all the volunteers (our ranks had grown to 21 by this hour) if the fire came and the decision was made by the County Fire Officer that we had to leave, would we go? Or we would stand and stay, fighting the fire head on? All the volunteer firefighters said they would stay and fight! They would not leave, even the ones that do not live in the community. We were ready to take on the fire, head on (the most dangerous tactic)!

**1300hrs - Big Elk Meadows was pretty much evacuated, although we did have residents that refused to leave, the firefighters then started making tours around the Meadows patrolling. Other teams of firefighters

began speed mitigation around the homes that we had evaluated might survive a fast moving, super-hot fire. We were monitoring the radio traffic of the fire, tracking where the fire was, how far the ember showers were going, making sure there were no spot fires from the embers and ash blowing into the Meadows. We also made note of the addresses where residents stayed, and made sure that no one came in that was not supposed to be in the community. Firefighters noted heavy ember and ash fall while they were evaluating properties. The patrols continued throughout the day.

****1832hrs** - Over the radio we heard a bone chilling call, an aircraft had gone down. A Single-Engine Air Tanker, a firefighting plane, was lost and presumed crashed.

****1852hrs** - VFD of Big Elk firefighters were toned to assist Estes Valley Fire, along with Pinewood Springs Fire, and Lyons Fire in locating the crash, and rescue the pilot of the downed aircraft. Big Elk sent three firefighters, in a Type-6 fire engine, to go assist. Other firefighters stayed behind in the meadows to keep up with fire patrols around Big Elk.

****1920hrs** - The crew that responded to the aircraft down arrived at the staging area.

****2135hrs** - The crew was released from the scene, and returned back to Big Elk.

****2200hrs** - Checked back in with our Fire Command and began doing fire patrols until 2330hrs. At that time crews were released and allowed to go home to get some rest, and another crew came on duty for the Overnight Patrol.

****Midnight 17 November, 2021** - Chief Isenhart responded to The Incident Command Center to get a fire update, and obtain an Incident Plan (IP) for that morning's plan to see where the fire was headed. We had gotten about an inch of snow, that slowed the fire down considerably.

****0800hrs** - Chief Isenhart put out a text message to all firefighters letting them know we were still on high alert; however, the fire had slowed, we could go about our plans for the day (work, appointments and such) and if the fire started making another push, he would put out a tone for response. Most of our firefighters came up, staying on standby at the station.

****1300hrs** - Chief Isenhart released all of us to go home and get some rest. This is because a shift of firefighters had been requested by Estes Valley for an operational period. This period marked another storm coming into the area, with extreme fire weather predicted.

****1700hrs** - VFD of Big Elk sent an overnight shift doing structure protection in Estes Park. VFD of Big Elk sent a Type- 6 engine and a tender with (3 to 6) personnel. Other personnel stayed behind to monitor fire conditions and respond to other emergency calls through the night.

****0700hrs** - The overnight crew returned. The fire was at 70% containment. The firefighters were released to go back to work, but were asked to keep our pagers on in case we were needed.

****20 November 2021, 1800hrs** - The fire was at 100% containment and all evacuation orders were lifted. Your volunteer firefighters put in over 300 hours during this fire emergency.

We would also like to take this opportunity to invite anyone that wants to join the Volunteer Fire Department of Big Elk to please do so. We are always looking for more members. <http://www.vfdofbigelk.org/join-us>

Thank you all for your support and for your time.

Sincerely,

Your VFD of Big Elk Volunteer Firefighters

FIREWISE CONTACT INFORMATION:

Nelson Renouf: (303)823-9516 <http://www.vfdofbigelk.org/firewise>

LETA/ Larimer Emergency Telephone Authority sign up for alerts: <https://nocoalert.org/>

Boulder County Emergency Alert System sign up: <https://member.everbridge.net/453003085612231/login>

To donate to VFD of Big Elk at any time, from anywhere: <https://www.coloradogives.org/VFDofBigElk>

Collin Isenhart
Fire Chief

Randy Evans
Assistant Chief

Nelson Renouf
Chairman of the Board

Glenn Christensen
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