

McKinley Fire

Update – Wednesday, August 28, 2019 @ 9:00 a.m.

Norm McDonald, Incident Commander

Fire Information: 907-313-9826

Email: 2019.mckinley@firenet.gov

Web: www.akfireinfo.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AK.Forestry/>

Acres: 3,316

Containment: 70%

Personnel: 560

Start Date: 8/17/2019

Community meeting TONIGHT, Wednesday August 28th at the Upper Susitna Senior Center at 6:30 p.m.

Firefighters continue to increase containment. They have been gridding and cold trailing along the fire perimeter which means they search for heat by lining up some distance into burned areas and running their bare hands through the ash. A drone with an infrared camera has assisted firefighters by finding hot spots along the utility corridor and other areas.

Crews have been working closely with the Matanuska Electric Association (MEA) moving south along the Parks Highway. They have been removing fire-damaged trees and repairing power lines to restore electricity as quickly as possible. Each day MEA has restored power to more homes. Excavators, feller bunchers and crews have been removing hazard trees near structures and homes. A feller buncher is an excavator with an attachment that can cut, lift and stack trees.

The Parks Highway remains open through the burned area with a speed limit of 45 mph. Be prepared to stop as flaggers are in areas where fire crews and residents are entering and exiting the roadway. Alaska State Troopers will be patrolling the highway to ensure everyone's safety. Within the burned area, expect to see smoke from interior pockets of heat into the foreseeable future.

Recently burned areas are very dangerous. Fire burns deeply in extremely dry duff layers and has weakened many trees that continue falling unexpectedly. Ash pits have caused minor burn injuries to firefighters. Ash pits are deep holes in the ground filled with hot ash and embers and are often hard to see. These conditions create a very dangerous environment for firefighters and residents.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough will be accepting debris caused by the McKinley and Deshka Landing Fires at no cost at specific locations. More information available at: <https://www.matsugov.us/news/mckinley-deshka-fire-debris-management-plan>

On Monday of this week "Level 3- Go" evacuation levels were reduced, and residents were able to re-enter their properties. Current evacuation levels are:

- **"Level 2 – Set"** between milepost 81.5 and 92. This level means having your items ready and being prepared to leave within minutes of a notification to leave.
- **"Level 1 – Ready"** between mileposts 79 and 81.5. This level means having an evacuation kit, family emergency plan, and evacuation plan.

Weather: High pressure over the area today will bring stable weather with warm and dry conditions. Winds will remain light, and slightly cooler weather should come this weekend. The last significant rain near the fire area occurred over a month ago on July 24th. As a result of these conditions, the fire danger remains high.

The Red Cross will be distributing emergency relief supplies at the Upper Susitna Senior Center (16463 Helena Drive, Talkeetna) from 10 am - 7 pm, and at the Curtis D Menard Memorial Sports Center (1001 S Clapp St, Wasilla) alongside Red Cross recovery casework and planning services. Overnight shelter services will only be available at the Menard Memorial Sports Center. The Red Cross will also distribute relief supplies via emergency response vehicles in neighborhoods affected by the fire. The distribution of relief supplies will continue until the needs of those affected are met.

Closures: A portion of Willow Swamp (Game Management Unit 14A) is closed due to the Deshka Landing Fire. For more info, visit the Alaska Department of Fish and Game website at <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/>. A Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) exists over the McKinley Fire. Pilots are advised to check NOTAMS at <https://tfr.faa.gov/tfr2/list.jsp> before flying near the fire area.

