



Fire Update

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Smokejumpers Respond to Two New Fires in Interior Alaska

(Fairbanks, Alaska) – BLM Alaska Fire Service Smokejumpers responded to two fires in rural Alaska in the last few days, emphasizing dry conditions still exist in some areas despite the wet, cold weather present in other regions. The **Richmond Fire (#338)** burning 39 miles north of Bettles is suspected of being human caused. It’s a reminder that people still need to be careful that their outdoor activities don’t ignite a fire. While the seasonal outlook predicts a [lower than normal fire season](#), that doesn’t mean it’s over. This is especially true in northern Alaska where dry conditions still persist – specifically the Yukon Flats and the Kobuk River Valley north of Kotzebue.

Smokejumpers are mopping up the 8.6-acre Richmond Fire burning on a Native allotment within the Gates of the Arctic National Park. BLM Alaska Fire Service received a report of the fire early Friday morning. Smokejumpers mobilized immediately after coming on duty that morning. Due to FAA regulations and firefighter work and rest ratio demands, wildfire protecting agencies cannot respond to fires 24 hours a day. For this reason, on duty hours encompass the times when new fires are typically identified, late afternoon and evening, while also providing for morning coverage. This makes it especially crucial for people to be careful they do not cause a fire that could endanger the lives of the public and firefighters and destroy property.

The fire burned all around a cabin on the allotment located on the shores of a lake within the Park near the confluence of the North Fork Koyukuk River and Richard Creek. The cabin survived the fire due to the efforts of a Coyote Air float plane pilot arriving from Bettles prior to smokejumper deployment. The eight smokejumpers were able to stop the fire from spreading past the 8.6 acres on Friday. They have been extinguishing hot spots and cleaning up vegetation around the cabin for the past few days. They anticipate having work completed in the next few days.

Meanwhile, smokejumpers responded to a 1-acre fire burning in the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge 40 miles southeast of Fort Yukon Sunday afternoon. BLM AFS personnel aboard a helicopter spotted the **Big Marsh Fire (#344)** Sunday afternoon. Eight smokejumpers are mopping up the fire that was burning in black spruce with some mixed hardwoods and brush. It was the only new fire reported on Sunday.

With all of the personnel demobilized off of the 12,139-acre **Isom Creek Fire (#187)** today, this leaves only three staffed fires in Alaska. The Midnight Sun Interagency Hotshots are still constructing protection measures around a Native allotment threatened by the 3,849-acre **Sheenjek River Fire (#296)** in the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge about 46 miles north of Fort Yukon.

With the exception of the Richmond Fire, which is still under investigation, all staffed fires were lightning caused.

To date, 305 reported fires have burned an estimated 175,103 acres in Alaska.

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