



Our View: More than luck— skill

August 23, 2007

In less than one week North Tahoe homes have burned, residents evacuated and Truckee's largest subdivision threatened in two separate, dangerous fires.

As both last Saturday's Washoe Fire and Wednesday's Interchange Fire ignited, many of us wondered if we were witnessing the early hours of an inferno similar to the Angora Fire, which burned more than 250 homes in South Tahoe earlier this summer.

It was easy to fear the worst, as smoke plumes billowed over North Tahoe and Truckee during windy conditions.

Despite increasingly dry forest conditions and fickle winds, both fires were quelled before breaking out of control.

For that we have to thank the swift response of helicopters, airtankers and firefighters from around the region. From our local Tahoe and Truckee firefighters, to Forest Service, Calfire and regional firefighting crews — the response was immediate and decisive.

Stories filtering out of the Washoe Fire tell of brave, split-second decisions to cut fire lines that residents say saved homes.

At both fires, planes and helicopters circled in a continuous attack.

As we've seen this summer, fires are a fact of life for communities in wooded and mountainous communities like our own. And we are lucky to have such highly trained, well-equipped and brave firefighters to protect us from this annual threat.

Additional thanks needs to go to the Nevada Fire Safe Council, Granlibakken and the North Tahoe Fire Protection District and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit for forest thinning work that helped suppress the Washoe Fire.

The Sierra Sun reported on the Granlibakken thinning project last year as crews were chainsawing and piling logs and brush around the resort. On Monday, Ron Parson, general manager of Granlibakken, was clearly relieved that the resort and his partners had the foresight to thin their forest.

"If it hadn't [been for that project], it would have blown through there like Sherman through Georgia," said Parson, who watched his guests be evacuated Saturday.

The fire eventually dwindled as it hit the treated forest area around Granlibakken.

"We were lucky, but we made our own luck in this case," Parson said.

In Truckee and North Tahoe, we feel the same way. In both fires we were lucky, but our quick-acting firefighting teams work on more than luck — it's skill.

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