

Teams across Oklahoma are assessing damage, flare-ups expected

FROM STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS
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While teams are trying to assess damage from Thursday's wind-driven wildfires, firefighters are already getting called back to homes they thought were put out Thursday.

Across the state Thursday, wildfires in western and central [Oklahoma](#) injured an estimated 34 people and damaged or destroyed 100 homes and other structures.

Midwest City

In [Midwest City](#), officials said there were an estimated 2000 acres burned, affecting 60 homes with 34 homes totally destroyed. In Choctaw, officials said there were another 17 homes destroyed.

[Midwest City Fire Marshal Jerry Lojka](#) said a report of a flare up of one of the extinguished homes in the Oakwood East addition is probably going to be a repeating occurrence today.

Because of numerous simultaneous fires Thursday, where flames were basically leaping from rooftop to rooftop, Lojka said firefighters weren't able to battle the blazes in the normal fashion. Firefighters just didn't have time to peel back walls and soak everything to make sure hot spots are out.

"We just did what we could and moved on to the next one," he said. "It's probably going to take us all day today to make sure everything is out."

After spending the night at the Midwest City Community Center, where about 75 residents went after flames threatened their homes Thursday, 51, [Christy Bryant](#), along with her daughter and five grandchildren, were still waiting to find out if they have a home left.

Bryant said she and her family left their home near NW 10 and [Reno](#), after seeing the orange glow of nearby fires become stronger and closer.

During the night at the shelter, Bryant said, her grandchildren were constantly bombarding her with questions about their toys, their clothes, their video games and their home.

"I keep telling them that material things don't matter," Bryant said. "We still have our lives, we still have each other — no matter what happens this morning."

While the Bryant and her family were preparing to see their neighborhood, residents in

Oakwood East were slowly returning to the random devastation throughout the hard hit neighborhood.

Sprinkler systems continued to spray water on scorched lawns, and water from a hard night of fighting fires ran through the streets of the neighborhood.

The door to one partially burned house in the neighborhood was wide open, as if the family got out as fast as they could, not even bothering to shut the door behind them.

Some houses were completely destroyed while the house next door appeared untouched.

[Nathan Christmon](#) of 2040 Westbury Drive, came home to find that his was the only house that burned on his entire street.

"It's almost like a tornado hit," the 42-year-old Devon tax accountant said. "It's just so random — the houses the fire chose to hit."

[Charlotte Moore](#), who had just flown back home from [Las Vegas](#), pulled into her Yorkshire Drive home this morning to find her neighbor's house burned to the ground. But the only damage she had was a fence.

"I had no luck in [Nevada](#) but I got lucky here," she said.

[Midwest City Police Chief Brandon Clabes](#) said he knew that there are people who will probably want to see the damage from the fires, but he is asking them not to.

"The best way to see the damage is to look at it on TV or the computer, not at the locations," he said. "If you don't live here or need to be here, we need you to stay away."

Clabes said emergency responders are tired and weary, but overall, they are in good condition and still doing their jobs.

"I can't give enough praise to our firefighters," he said. "They did the most outstanding job I've ever seen, even though they feel like they didn't because they felt helpless at times.

"We know we saved some lives," the chief said. "We just don't know how many."

Carter County

Preliminary estimates indicate that 50,000 acres of [Carter County](#) were burned by out-of-control fires Thursday, said [Ed Reed](#), Carter County Emergency Management director.

"It was so hard, so fast and so furious," Reed said about the 13 fires that caused hundreds of evacuations. "The 18 years I have been doing this, I have never seen anything like this."

Fires started about noon Thursday and weren't under control until after 3:30 a.m.

Friday.

At least one firefighter was injured.

Reed said he isn't sure how many structures were lost in the fires. They were out at daybreak beginning assessment of the damages.

At least one [Ratliff City](#) firefighter lost his home while fighting the fires, Reed said.

The [Fox-Graham Fire Department](#) was destroyed by fire while firefighters were battling the wildfires.

"They lost a truck, records, tools and everything," Reed said. "It was totaled. It was unbelievable."

Reed said he had no idea how many fire departments came to the aid of those in Carter County.

Garvin/McClain Counties

Near Lindsay, about 55 miles south of [Oklahoma City](#), 13 homes were damaged or destroyed, said [Eric Johnson](#), the city manager of Purcell. The homes were located between Lindsay, in [Garvin County](#), and Purcell, in neighboring [McClain County](#).

Stephens County

A raging fire fanned by 40 mile-per-hour winds caused the evacuation of the entire town of Velma Thursday.

The fire destroyed 15 homes and three downtown businesses in this [Stephens County](#) town of more than 600 people, said [Gary Ball](#), Stephens County Emergency Management director.

There were numerous garages and storage buildings also destroyed in the fire that started about 1 p.m.

A couple of firefighters suffered smoke inhalation while fighting the fires. They were taken for medical treatment and then released.

Residents were allowed back to their homes starting at 11:30 p.m. Thursday. No one could enter the housing additions without going by City Hall for a slip of paper verifying their home address, Ball said.

Elsewhere in Stephens County, there were fires in Loco and between Meridian and Duncan.

The Meridian Nursing Home was evacuated during the fire, Ball said.

Lincoln County

In [Lincoln County](#), about 40 miles northeast of Oklahoma City, a firefighter suffered major burns while battling a blaze and was taken to an Oklahoma City hospital,

Chandler Emergency Management Director Larry Hicks said. The firefighter was listed in stable condition in the burn unit of Integris Baptist Medical Center, emergency management officials said.

"We had one truck that got overrun," Hicks said. "It's pretty severe."

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to bad it didnt burn all of midwest city and choctaw to the ground. i guess i know where to throw my cigarette butts.

Randy, Moore - Apr 10, 2009 at 11:27 am

Report as [inappropriate](#) or [Ignore Randy](#)

There were separate fire B...there was one in MWC, and there was one out near Choctaw...the one near Choctaw is what I'm referring to, because they said it started on the side of the road.

Cletus, Mayberry - Apr 10, 2009 at 11:26 am

Report as [inappropriate](#) or [Ignore Cletus](#)

Cletus (is that really your name??? LOL)--From the information I recieved at the end of evacuation debrief, it was caused by an constuction accidental fire (gas line) near 2800 Westminster. Bryan--its a typo---NE10th NOT NW10th

B, Nicoma Park - Apr 10, 2009 at 11:10 am

Report as [inappropriate](#) or [Ignore B](#)

Did they find out the cause yet? I'm still hedging my bets on stupid smokers.

Cletus, Mayberry - Apr 10, 2009 at 10:47 am

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Please News stations... Fly over areas affected by the fires in Choctaw/MWC so people affected can see if their homes have burned!!!

William, Del City - Apr 10, 2009 at 10:46 am

Report as [inappropriate](#) or [Ignore William](#)

yeah...not sure where they would be referring to. we are at about SE 10th, between Post and Westminster in MWC and could see it from our house, and left bc of smoke.

Shay, Oklahoma City - Apr 10, 2009 at 10:40 am

Report as [inappropriate](#) or [Ignore Shay](#)

"Bryant said she and her family left their home near NW 10 and Reno, after seeing the orange glow of nearby fires become stronger and closer." NW 10th and Reno? Those streets are parallel, never intersect, and NW10th isn't where the fires were. Mistake?

Bryan, Oklahoma City - Apr 10, 2009 at 10:26 am

Report as [inappropriate](#) or [Ignore Bryan](#)