



NORTHERN ROCKIES TEAM 3

INCIDENT COMMANDER: MIKE BEHRENS

Big Knife, Niarada, & Mill Pocket Fires

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

Fire Information: 406-426-9595 | 2023.BigKnife@firenet.gov

<https://tinyurl.com/BigKnifeFire>

<https://tinyurl.com/NiaradaMillPocketFires>

August 3, 2023

Location: Big Knife - 5 miles east of Arlee, MT | Niarada - 12 miles west of Elmo, MT | Mill Pocket: 3 miles West of Hwy. 28

Start Date: Big Knife - 7/24/2023 | Niarada - 7/30/2023 | Mill Pocket – 7/30/2023 **Cause:** Lightning
Big Knife - 2,710 acres, 0% contained | **Niarada** – 13,686 acres, 0% contained | **Mill Pocket** – 1,929 acres, 0% contained

Total Personnel: 211 total **Engines:** 24 **Aircraft:** 1 + others available as needed **Hand Crews:** 5

Community meeting TONIGHT!

Join us for a community meeting regarding the Big Knife, Niarada, and Mill Pocket fires **tonight, Thursday, August 3, 2023, 6:00 PM**, at the Arlee Community Center, 34086 Pow Wow Road in Arlee. We will broadcast the meeting live on the CSKT Division of Fire Facebook page (www.facebook.com/CSKT.Division.of.Fire). We will host a second community meeting Friday, August 4, 2023, 6:00 PM, at the Elmo Community Center, 47088 Cemetery Road in Elmo. We will either broadcast that meeting live on Facebook or record and post to Facebook afterwards, depending upon internet connectivity.

Big Knife Fire

The Big Knife Fire burned actively Wednesday, with a spot fire south of Big Knife Creek burning eastward into the South Fork Jocko Tribal Primitive Areas and a portion of the fire also well-established on the north side of the Big Knife drainage. The fire is burning in extremely steep terrain, so crews continue to try to flank the fire and monitor the southwest edge. Strategic firing operations may be necessary to prevent spread to the west toward the valley. Aircraft are aiding crews as conditions allow, although limited visibility has hindered some air operations. Big Knife Fire remains visible from Missoula and throughout the Jocko Valley.

Niarada Fire & Mill Pocket Fire

The Niarada Fire remained active Wednesday, spreading both to the northeast and southeast. Crews, heavy equipment, engines, helicopters, and fixed-wing aircraft continue to work the fire, building firelines from safe anchor points and protecting structures in the area. Late Tuesday and Wednesday, the Flathead Interagency Hotshot Crew successfully implemented strategic firing operations on the north perimeter along Cromwell Creek Road, helping secure the fire perimeter nearest Lake Mary Ronan. So far, crews are successfully holding that line. Crews are also scouting for opportunities to stop the fire’s southeasterly progression, where erratic winds and heavy fuels are hampering containment. Firefighters made great headway on the Mill Pocket Fire Wednesday, completing initial fireline around the entire perimeter. However, crews need to improve and hold that line before containment is achieved.

WEATHER AND FIRE BEHAVIOR

Hot, dry weather is forecast through Friday, with the potential for thunderstorms and light precipitation by late weekend. Based upon weather conditions and trends, there is continued potential for active fire behavior and large fire growth.

CLOSURES AND SPECIAL MESSAGES

The Lake County Sheriff has several areas near the base of the mountains west of the Big Knife Fire in PRE-EVACUATION status. See the map for those locations in yellow (Jocko, Canal, Francis). In the Tribal Primitive Area, Belmore Slough



and Burnt Cabin Roads are closed. Near the Niarada Fire, the Lake County Sheriff has placed the Walking Horse Lane area in PRE-EVACUATION status, and the town of Elmo is in READY status. The Flathead County Sheriff's Office has issued a PRE-EVACUATION WARNING for Hubbart Dam Rd/NF-544 from the intersection of Crossover Rd South to Hwy 28. A MANDATORY EVACUATION remains in place from the top of the Pass on Brown's Meadow Road South to Hwy 28, Nirada. This mandatory evacuation also includes Kofford Ridge Rd.

Use extreme caution when driving on Highway 28. Visibility is very poor, and the speed limit has been reduced to 45 mph.

