



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 4, 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- 4,412 acres, 0% contained | **Niarada** – 14,816 acres, 0% contained | **Mill Pocket** – 2,125 acres, 0% contained

Total Personnel: 223 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, Friday, August 4, 2023, 6:00 PM**, at the Elmo Community Center, 47088 Cemetery Road in Elmo. The meeting will broadcast live on the CSKT Facebook page.

Big Knife Fire

The Big Knife Fire continues to be active, burning north of Big Knife Creek and into the Gold Creek drainage. On the south side the fire established in Agency Creek. The fire is burning in extremely steep terrain, fueled by heavy timber and significant dead and down fuels, so crews continue to try to flank the fire and monitor the southwest edge. Heavy equipment created a good anchor point by brushing along the Jocko S canal to tie existing firelines together on the west edge of the fire. Aircraft will assist 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

The Niarada Fire remained active Thursday on the northeast, south and southeast perimeters. Late in the evening, on the southeast side, the fire moved into lighter fuels near private land. Crews are building containment lines and working on structure protection in that area today. Tonight, a night shift will continue structure protection and holding containment lines. The Flathead Interagency Hotshot Crew is taking direct suppression actions on the northern perimeter where safe to do so. They are also monitoring and patrolling the area where firing operations occurred. Crews continue scouting for opportunities to stop the fire's southeasterly progression, where erratic winds and heavy fuels are hampering containment.

Mill Pocket Fire

The Mill Pocket fire breached existing fireline on the northwest side yesterday. Aircraft delivered fire retardant and water to assist firefighters, successfully stopping further spread.



WEATHER AND FIRE BEHAVIOR

Hot, dry weather is forecast through Friday. Then, meteorologists predict increased potential for thunderstorms and light precipitation over the weekend, with a slight drying trend into next week. Although incoming moisture may help to temporarily moderate potential fire behavior (lessening the chance of long runs and torching in the short-term), thunderstorms also bring concerns related to erratic, outflow winds. 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 placed 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 is 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.

Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs) are in place over all three fires. For the safety of aerial resources and firefighters on the ground, please do not fly unmanned aircraft (drones) in the fire vicinity. **If you fly, we can't!**

Use extreme caution when driving on Highway 28. Authorities reduced speed limits to 45 mph due to poor visibility, and firefighters and equipment are still working in the area.

