

Crews pounce on Stateline wildland fire



Tahoe-Douglas
Battalion
Chief Dennis
McLaughlin
plots where
crews are
fighting
Tuesday's
fire.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE — Less than an acre of brush around the water towers that are about one-quarter of a mile up the hill from Loop Road burned in a late morning fire Tuesday.

The number of emergency vehicles in and around the area was mostly precautionary because of the “red flag” warning issued by the National Weather Service. With sustained winds of 25mph at lake level and gusts nearly double that, the wildland fire could have quickly gotten out of control.

Crews from Tahoe-Douglas, CalFire, South Lake Tahoe and Lake Valley helped with the fire on Bureau of Land Management land.

At one point the radio crackled with, "You have a broken hose, that's why there is no pressure."

Despite the glitch, the fire was contained shortly after reports of smoke were called in at 10:30am.

A helicopter from the U.S. Forest Service hovered above while ground crews extinguished the blaze.

The cause is unknown. The Nevada fire marshal is conducting the investigation.

A number of homeless people are known to live in the hills above the Stateline casinos. With overnight lows in the 20s this week, it is possible people had set a fire to get warm.

While firefighters did their job, Heavenly's gondola whisked people to the top of the mountain and construction crews kept working on the Van Sickle bi-state park.

The Loop Road was closed to traffic for more than an hour.

A number of small fires have occurred this season in the area. Some have been blamed on people tossing cigarettes out of the gondola " but none has been destructive like the 2002 Gondola Fire that burned 652 acres and threatened a number of businesses and residences in the Kingsbury Grade area.