

Reno fire contained, 29 homes lost, 8 damaged

By Brian Duggan, Reno Gazette-Journal

Cheryl Wilson still had bruises on her hands Sunday, a painful reminder of the frantic moments after awakening to smoke at 2am Friday, then running to her neighbors' doors on Starr Meadows Loop to pound on them as hard as she could.

The victim of a house fire in 2005, Wilson said her first instinct was to notify people on her street before packing up her car and leaving with her husband and two dogs as the Caughlin Fire approached their neighborhood.

"So I knew the No. 1 thing was to get people out," she said. "Anything else can be replaced. It's just stuff. But you got to save people's lives."

They watched the fire roar with a pair of binoculars while perched on top of the Peppermill parking garage that night. When they returned on Saturday, their house had been spared by the inferno. Their next-door neighbor's home, however, was uninhabitable with a red marker telling everyone to stay away from its charred remains.

"It's a horrible thing to see happen to your neighbors," Wilson said. "I just thank God that they're all alive."

From her backyard porch that overlooks the Truckee Meadows, Wilson looked at the homes still standing despite the 1,935-acre blaze that ultimately destroyed 29 homes, damaging eight others – seven seriously.

"Look at the devastation that could have happened."

Residents continued picking up the pieces on Sunday as officials from insurance agencies, the Red Cross and

restoration businesses made their rounds in the southwestern Reno neighborhoods. Fire officials patrolled the area, too, ensuring people stayed out of the homes deemed too unsafe for entry.

Officials said Sunday evening that the Caughlin Fire was 100 percent contained after more than 100 firefighters spent the day looking for hot spots, doing what they could to extinguish them as heavy snowflakes started falling in the afternoon.

Many of those smoldering areas were inside some of the 29 demolished homes, said Mark Regan, the spokesman for the Sierra Front Management Team overseeing the response to the Caughlin Fire.

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