

Man says he is responsible for Washoe Drive Fire

By Reno Gazette-Journal

10:13pm:

Southbound Highway 395 is open at Mount Rose Highway. Northbound Highway 395 to reopen later tonight, Nevada Highway Patrol reports.

8:15pm (summary story)

The Washoe Drive Fire that destroyed 29 homes and charred 3,177 acres south of Reno started Thursday afternoon because a man improperly discarded hot fireplace ashes on the northern end of Washoe Valley, officials said Friday evening.

The blaze was 65 percent contained as 300 firefighters continued to work to extinguish hotspots amid another weather system that brought high winds and the threat of potential flash flooding in the areas that burned.

The elderly man, who officials declined to name Friday, came forward to investigators earlier in the day to admit he had discarded the ashes in a utility trailer shortly before 1pm Thursday. This is about the time the Washoe Drive Fire started. So far, the cost of the response has been estimated at \$690,000 while the damage is likely to be in the millions, officials said.

"He was overcome with remorse," said Reno Fire Chief Michael Hernandez, who added the Washoe County district attorney will investigate and determine if criminal charges should be filed against the man.

Meanwhile, officials confirmed the only fatality associated with the fire was an elderly woman who lived on Old Ophir

Road. The cause of death remains unknown, but authorities believed she died because of smoke inhalation. An autopsy was pending.

Officials had no word on when the 2,000 residents who remained evacuated from the area Friday night could return.

Read the whole story