

Wildland fire closes Highway 50

Updated 9:40pm:

The Kyburz wildland fire has jumped across the American River heading east and prompted mandatory evacuations from Whitehall to Sand Flat Campground, according to U.S. Forest Service reports.

The federal agency has beefed up its personnel working the fire to 350. The blaze that started this afternoon shortly before 2pm is 5 percent contained and under investigation.

CVS Pharmacy worker Tracy Nasca told Lake Tahoe News the air outside her Pollock Pines store is not enshrouded in smoke and there are no signs of the fire from the Sly Park Road exit aside from Highway 50 being closed. However, store personnel has been forced to deal with some confused customers needing to be diverted along Route 49 to Interstate 80 to go east.

Updated 9:05pm:

The Kyburz fire has grown to 100 acres and deployed 224 personnel working 21 engines and six water tankers among five hand crews, the U.S. Forest Service's Incident Command site reported.

Voluntary evacuations are underway from Sand Flat to Strawberry, with centers established at the Pollock Pines Community Center at 2675 Sanders Dr. in Pollock Pines.

The fire is burning in steep terrain on both sides of Highway 50, which closed earlier this afternoon.

Still, the Forest Service indicated "making good progress,"

despite the threat of structures.

A wildland fire has Highway 50 closed between Ice House Road and Strawberry.

At about 3pm the fire was at 20 acres.

“It’s burning on the north side toward the 2013 Kyburz burn. Structures are threatened,” Kristi Schroeder with the Eldorado National Forest told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It is not known how the July 23 fire started. However, reports are that a broken axle from a truck may have ignited the blaze.

The U.S. Forest Service is attacking the fire by air, including using the Super Scooper airplane that arrived at Lake Tahoe Airport this week.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*