

Emerald Fire aftermath plagues area residents

Updated Oct. 28, 6:53pm: Power has been restored to Spring Creek. However, power will off Nov. 2 adn Nov. 3 from 8am-5pm to make final repairs.

By Kathryn Reed

The 137 cabins in Spring Creek tract are still without power because of the Emerald Fire. Water is also an issue.

Liberty Utilities is hoping the lights will be back on by Nov. 4 at the latest. Multiple poles were reduced to ash when a fire swept through this area of the South Shore on Oct. 14. Replacement poles were flown in last Saturday.

“We are scheduled to pull wire in this week, but we are worried about the weather if the helicopter can fly,” Randy Kelly with Liberty told *Lake Tahoe News*.

While the cabins are on U.S. Forest Service land, the cabin owners are responsible for their own water.

Spring Creek Tract Association water manager Dave Braheny did not respond to an email inquiry from *Lake Tahoe News*.



The Emerald Fire singed nearly 200 acres on the South Shore. Photo/LTN

A generator is being used to access the water from the old tank. This is causing some residents to have water pressure issues. (A few people use the cabins year-round, while most of the 176 cabins are used seasonally. Legally, the cabins cannot be a primary residence.)

“The water supply for the Emerald Fire came from the hydrant system at Spring Creek,” Lisa Herron with the Forest Service told *Lake Tahoe News*. “According to our fire managers, there were no issues with water flow during the Emerald Fire.” In some areas the fire burned on both sides of Highway 89.

Spring Creek has 12 fire hydrants and more than three miles of 8-inch diameter and smaller distribution pipe. There is also a new 80,000-gallon water tank, but that water cannot be used for human consumption.

Residents started the water tank replacement project in 2008, with it being erected in 2015.

“We had to add a few more braces, anchors to the tank because earthquake codes changed,” Jay Tripathi told *Lake Tahoe News*. He has a cabin there and used to be on the community’s board of directors. “The interior of the tank got compromised so we

had to seal it up.”

This meant draining, cleaning, sealing and refilling.

When the fire hit, the housing tract was close to being at the end of the waiting period for the water in the new tank to have settled and for tests to be taken to determine if it is potable. That is why residents are relying on the old tank for drinking water.

Driving through the main area of the housing tract the fire is not evident – just a major thinning project.

“I think all the fire folks did a phenomenal job of keeping us in the loop. It was scary,” Tripathi said. “If it hadn’t rained, I think it would have gone through our tract.”

While CalFire has yet to release an official cause of the fire, evidence points to electrical wires during high winds sparking the wildland fire.