

NEWS RELEASE: **Sheep Herder Hill Complex Fire**

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Fire Fighting Activities Winding Down Residents Encouraged to Remain Vigilant and Mitigate

Tuesday, September 18, 2012, 11:00 a.m. Casper, WY – With “very solid” containment lines around the fire perimeter and previously threatened structures, extensive firefighting activities are winding down on the Sheep Herder Hill Complex Fire. Residents are cautioned that heavier than usual emergency vehicle traffic will continue for the next two days and many damaged and dangerous hazard trees remain in the fire area. A Type III Incident Management Team, led by Incident Commander Dick Terry of the Wyoming State Division of Forestry, expects to return control of the fire area back to local fire agencies Wednesday night at 8:00 p.m.

Today, fire personnel are patrolling the fire lines, removing hazard trees and mitigating any remaining issues of concern. “the crews have done a great job eliminating hazards around structures and roads,” says Terry, “but we can’t stress enough that people will need to be very cautious in the burn area because of the damage to trees and their root systems.” Damaged trees can fall **at any time** with or without wind, and fire officials suggest residents use a licensed and insured tree service to remove hazard trees. In addition, smoke will likely be visible in isolated parts of the burn area until there is sufficient moisture to extinguish remaining hot spots.

The smoke in the air from this and other fires in Wyoming should serve as a reminder to residents that it’s “never too late to mitigate.” Removing dead limbs and excess forest litter or “duff,” as well as thinning trees and brush around structures improves the ability of fire fighters to protect structures during a fire, and the structure’s ability to withstand fire. Visit www.firewise.org for more information on how to mitigate. Natrona County Fire Protection District, with help from a Bureau of Land Management fire engine, and other area fire agencies, will patrol the fire area beginning Thursday. Residents who see active fire or who are concerned about smoke should call 9-1-1.

Natrona County Emergency Management Agency has lifted mandatory evacuations for *most* residents and canceled all pre-evacuation orders. Residents and property owners with proof of residency or ownership are being allowed into their properties on Casper Mountain. They are required to show proof of property ownership or residency to Natrona County Sheriff’s Deputies at the road blocks into the area.

One portion of the fire area remains closed and under an evacuation order. The evacuation area is bounded roughly by Limber Pine Trail on the north, south to Hazelton Trail, Cougar Drive on the west, and east to Canyon Drive. The evacuation area also includes lower Ponderosa Park Road, which is closed at the switchback. The Muddy Mountain Road is open to the general public but access to Muddy Mountain is from South Circle Drive or Coal Mountain Road **ONLY**.

Agencies assisting include the Natrona County Fire Protection District, Casper Fire-EMS, Casper Mountain, Mills, Evansville, and Bar-Nunn Fire Departments, Wyoming Army National Guard, Natrona County Emergency Management, Natrona County Sheriff’s Department, Wyoming Medical Center, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Wyoming State Forestry Division, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Forest Service, Casper-Natrona County Health Department, Wyoming Office of Homeland Security and Natrona County Medical Reserve Board.

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