



“When the Going Gets Tough”

**By Upton Mayor
Nick Trandahl**

My six-year old daughter is a staunch supporter of Smokey Bear. As she’s been observing the thick haze of wildfire smoke seemingly settled perpetually over Upton throughout the month of July, she’s voiced more than once, “Smokey is so mad, I bet.”

Those flames roared a little too close to home Monday, when a fire at the Crook County line north of Barton Road burst into life after a lightning storm Sunday evening. With hot dry winds blowing south toward Upton, landowners and residents of Barton Road were forced to evacuate out of the timber and into town. Weston County Sheriff Bryan Colvard immediately reached out to me, and the ball was rolling. At the drop of a hat, Upton Clerk/Treasurer Kelley Millar left Town Hall to unlock the Upton Community Center so Barton Road evacuees had a nice cool place to rest. She also came stockpiled with a plethora of snacks and bottled water so evacuees had something to eat and drink while they waited it out.

Joining Clerk Millar at the community center as the evacuees began arriving were Councilwoman Tiffany McMillan and myself, as well as Kelly Wozney and Courtney Huckins of the Upton Ambulance Service and Upton Volunteer Fire Department Secretary and support services Amy Torstveit. Additionally, a few youngsters whose parents serve in Upton’s emergency services pitched in to set out tables and chairs for evacuees in the community

center as well as to stand vigilant outside the community center to direct evacuees. Having an ambulance on hand was crucial not only in case someone needed medical attention, but also because the radios provided a constant stream of information.

Fortunately, the skilled members of the Upton Volunteer Fire Department under the leadership of Chief Lester Riehemann and all the other fire protection agencies that responded and came to Upton’s aid brought the blaze at the north end of Barton Road under control, and the evacuation was lifted, allowing folks who live out there north of Upton to return to their homes.

I am a fella filled with gratitude today, grateful to Upton’s town staff, especially Clerk Millar for immediately jumping into action to ensure evacuees had a cool place to rest with food and water. I’m grateful to Councilwoman McMillan and the members of the Upton Ambulance Service that pitched in for the evacuees at the community center and to the selfless members of the Upton Volunteer Fire Department who battled the blaze with firefighters from Crook and Weston Counties. I’m also grateful to our partners in Newcastle and throughout Weston and Crook Counties—the Weston County Sheriff’s Office, Crook County Sheriff’s Office, Weston County Emergency Management, Weston County Fire Protection District, Newcastle Fire Department, Weston County School District No. 7 and Superintendent Dr. Clark Coberly, Newcastle Mayor Pam Gualtieri for immediately reaching out to me with offers of any assistance our community needed, the *Weston County Gazette* for immediately sharing updates with community members as we received them from Sheriff Bryan Colvard, and all the other emergency agencies and individuals who dropped everything and pitched in when the going got tough Monday.

We’re not out of the weeds yet, folks. We’re in the smoldering heart of fire season. Stay vigilant.