



One firefighter injured after massive brush fire ravages northern Calhoun

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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CALHOUN COUNTY - One firefighter was treated for heat exhaustion and smoke inhalation following a two-day battle against an out-of-control brush fire off of **Pleasant Dell Hollow Road**, which may have burned as many as 1,000 acres.

North Calhoun Fire Protection District Assistant Fire Chief Chase Prokuski said that firefighter has since been treated and was told by a doctor to take a week from firefighting as his lungs clear. He also said the fire, which began Sunday Feb. 12, 2017, may have been one of the largest he has seen in Calhoun County. As many as 50 firefighters from Calhoun, Pike and **Greene Counties** worked from Sunday afternoon into the evening of Monday, Feb. 13, 2017, to quell the blaze.

"We received a call for an out-of-control brush fire," Prokuski said. "By the time we arrived, approximately 40-50 acres were on fire."

Officially, the cause of the fire is under investigation, but Prokuski said it most likely originated from a pile of burning leaves. He said this year's abnormally dry winter coupled with Sunday's wind gusts of nearly 30 m.p.h. created an ideal scenario for the spreading of embers into an inferno.

"Because of the dry and windy conditions, it went up a mountain, down into a ravine and into fields," he said. "We had different departments hitting it from different directions."

Many of the areas burning were inaccessible to firefighting vehicles, so firefighters were forced to attack the conflagration with water packs and leaf blowers, Prokuski said.

After darkness fell Sunday evening, Prokuski said firefighters believed the fire may have been extinguished, or at least mostly contained. He said he felt a bit more confident Monday morning when no further calls came into the station. Unfortunately, Monday afternoon's gusts reignited the blaze.

"Thankfully, Mother Nature provided us with a little bit of rain and no wind," he said.

Firefighters continued to battle the blaze from approximately 2:30 to 9:30 p.m. Monday. By Monday evening, Prokuski said the inferno was 99 percent contained, but nearly 1,000 acres had been affected. Most of that acreage was in Calhoun County, but a sliver slipped over the border into **Pike County**.

Prokuski thanked all the fire departments who assisted in the blaze, including the **Hardin Fire Department** and the **Carrollton Fire Department** as well as several Pike County departments, which responded.