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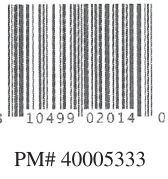
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Monday blaze consumes barn in matter of minutes

By R. Bruce McIntyre
Staff Writer

Douglas -- Jim Lynch could only stand by and watch as more than 30 firefighters from three different townships did their best to contain a fire that destroyed his barn Monday morning and came close to spreading to his home and two other structures.

The Douglas Fire Department received a call of a barn fire at 1605 Stone Road at about 8:45 o'clock and when firefighters arrived, they were met with intense heat from both the fire and the +34 degree temperatures.

Fire Chief Kevin Van Woezik, who is Mr. Lynch's nephew, said the main priority was containing the scene.

"That barn went up really fast," he told the Leader. "The heat was very intense and some of the nearby buildings were melting on the outside. We were concerned about the heat and flames spreading to the next two barns and the house so our priority was containing it and saving the buildings."

Some members of the fire department were stationed at the two buildings and spent close to 30 minutes watering down the sides of the structures to reduce the chance of them catching fire.

Along with the challenge of containing the fire was the physical toll the heat took on the firefighters. Over the course of the first hour, a few men were taken off the line to a cool and shaded resting area.

Deputy-Chief Bill McHale said the intense heat required close maintenance of personnel.

"The heat was unbearable," he said. "We had a couple of guys who were close to passing out while battling the blaze, but luckily everyone was okay."

Shortly after arrival, Chief Van Woezik requested assistance from the Horton Fire Department under its Mutual Aid Agreement. Two pumpers were dispatched to the farm and arrived around 9:40 a.m. Prior to their arrival, Douglas hauled water from a nearby creek to assist in containing

the blaze.

Around 9:50 a.m., a pumper from Whitewater Region also arrived to assist in maintaining an adequate supply of water. Six members of the Whitewater Fire Department began emptying water and a few of them, along with the eight members from the Horton Fire Department, took turns relieving the Douglas crew on the main line.

"That's what you call good neighbours," Chief Van Woezik. "A fire is a terrible thing, but we were lucky because it is a holiday today and a lot of the guys were close to home and not at work and that is why you have about 30 guys out here. Everybody is pitching in to help Jim (Lynch)."

Mr. Lynch, who used the barn for storage and mechanical repairs, had no idea how the fire started.

"The kids noticed there was smoke coming out from underneath the door," Mr. Lynch said. "Holy man, by the time we figured out what was going on, it was all over. We managed to get a car out of the barn and a small tractor, but it was just full of stuff that is all gone now."

Along with the vehicles, Mr. Lynch said there were welding tools, snowmobiles, an Argo ATV, tools and several smaller items that were destroyed in the blaze.

The steel barn was 96 feet long and 48 feet wide and at one point, there was a large explosion, likely from a propane tank inside the structure.

Sean Plunkett and Amber Hultink of the Renfrew County Paramedic Service arrived around 9:30 and attended to Mr. Lynch and some firefighters dealing with heat exhaustion. As a precaution, they requested firefighters to sit in the air conditioned ambulance or Mr. Lynch's home every 30 minutes to get a break from the heat.

Members of the Douglas department remained on scene for most of the day putting out the hotspots while they waited for heavy machinery to arrive and remove some of the debris.



Fire destroyed a barn on Stone Road near Douglas early Monday morning. The structure, owned by Jim Lynch, was levelled within minutes and had more than 30 firefighters from three townships on site battling the blaze. Not only did the fire cause severe heat that melted parts of other buildings, but it was a challenge for firefighters with temperatures hovering above 40 degrees with the humidity factored in. Photo Bruce McIntyre

Timely advice offered to cope with the intense heat wave

By Terry Fleurie
Staff Writer

Pembroke -- In light of last weekend's intense heat and humidity that had residents across the county seeking whatever relief they could find from the soaring temperatures, the

Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) and County of Renfrew Paramedic Service are offering residents some advice to prevent heat-related illness during the ongoing "heat wave".

Temperatures soared over the Canada Day long-weekend, with humidex values into the mid-40s that saw little relief overnight with low temperatures still in the low 20s.

While extreme heat can put everyone at risk from heat illness, health risks are greatest for older adults, infants and young children, people with chronic health conditions, people who work or exercise in the heat, homeless people and low-income earners.

The following actions to stay cool are recommended:

* Drink plenty of cool liquids, es-

pecially water, before feeling thirsty;

* Wear loose-fitting, light-coloured clothing made of breathable fabric;

* Take a cool shower or bath until you feel refreshed;

* Take a break from the heat by spending a few hours in a cool place such as a shopping mall, local library or community centre;

* Avoid sun exposure. Shade yourself by using a wide-brimmed hat or umbrella;

* Reschedule or plan outdoor activities during cooler parts of the day.

* Never leave people or pets in your car inside a parked vehicle or in direct sunlight.

* Limit or avoid sugary, caffeinated and alcoholic beverages.

"Heat illnesses are preventable," the release stated. "The most dangerous heat illness is heat stroke.

It is recommended caring for someone with heat stroke symptoms, such as complete or partial loss of consciousness, confusion and high body temperature, call 911 immediately. While waiting for help, cool

the person by moving them to a cool place, applying cold water to large areas of the skin or clothing and fanning the person as much as possible.

County of Renfrew Paramedic Service Chief Mike Nolan said the service saw an increase in the calls they received over the weekend.

"We responded at number of emergencies across the county related to the heat, from it making certain chronic conditions like breathing and heart problems worse, right through to people with overexposure to the sun and the heat at numerous events," he said.

Chief Nolan said as recently as Monday evening, a crew was dispatched to a ball diamond where someone collapsed from heat exhaustion. As of Tuesday morning, he could not contribute any fatalities to the conditions.

"We had the call to the ball diamond, we had someone pass out at that event on the bridge in Eganville, so there's a fair bit of that going on. But luckily nobody has died."

He said the paramedic service has been very pro-active through its Community Paramedic Program.

"We now have a register of people who would be vulnerable, so we have been pro-actively visiting people in the community. Checking in on those that have known heart or breathing problems, or who don't have air conditioning."

He noted on one occasion, a woman they checked on was sent to hospital.

Chief Nolan said he was delighted to partner with the RCDHU to get the heat advisory out last week heading into the Canada Day weekend.

"I would say people heard the message. For the most part, they avoided long exposure to the sun, people were remaining hydrated and drinking lots of water, which is key.

"But we're not in the clear yet, the remainder of this week is going to be persistently hot, so as the days go on, we need people to ensure they keep up with the messaging and do what they can to avoid the negative

consequences," he added.

No extra staff was required for the Canada Day weekend, but some members of the service agreed to juggle their hours to help cover the busier times.

"They were very co-operative to shift their hours from noon until midnight, which got us through the hottest hours of the day. We put them on a First Response vehicle so they could both do home checks and be available for the events as they proceeded in the evening."

He said it was during the events that they received some of the calls which were covered by that First Response unit. Chief Nolan said he'd like to think their joint message with the RCDHU was a reminder for the population.

"The vast majority of people know what to do and when to do it and how to do it, but we certainly see enough of a spike in calls that it warrants a friendly reminder with reliable advice. We want to make sure people are getting advice they can trust.

"We don't want to spoil their fun, we just want to make sure they're safe," he added.

The City of Pembroke issued its own heat warning for the Canada Day weekend and established several "cooling centres". They were located at the Pembroke Mall, the West End Mall, Giant Tiger, and at the St. John Ambulance location on MacKay Street.

Christine Ferguson, vice-president of patient services at Renfrew Victoria Hospital, said their emergency department saw a small increase of cases over the weekend that were weather related.

"They (emergency department) said over the weekend they certainly had more elderly patients coming in with heat-related or heat exhaustion kinds of things."

Ms. Ferguson said sometimes the elderly in the community are hesitant to use their air conditioners because it makes them cold, but she suggested with this heat they consider turning them on.

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