

Massive field blaze recounted; injured firefighter acknowledged

(KAIR)--The Emergency Management Coordinator for Doniphan County is compiling an after action report pertaining to a late October wildfire that required a strong presence of fire fighters and left one firefighter hospitalized with serious injuries.

Coordinator Julie Meng is joined by fire districts and the forest service in compiling the report, and provided the Doniphan County Commission, on Monday, with an update regarding the blaze, which she said began on the west end of the county, north of Denton, then traveled over two miles to the Severance area.

According to Meng, all rural county fire districts responded to the October 29 fire, assisted by what the unofficial minutes of Monday's meeting calls "approximately twenty farmers, and fire departments from other districts in Brown County and Deputy Officer Jared Ratzlaff."

Meng, who said "somethings were done wrong, but a lot was done right," informed the Commission of the effects felt from a change in the county's emergency response, explaining that because the ambulance district is now a stand-alone agency, they were not dispatched to the scene of the fire until there was a report of injury. Prior to the change, the ambulance service, Meng said, was tied to a fire district, with the two arriving together at such an emergency.

Injured, and requiring that ambulance response, was District 5 firefighter Alan Boeh who, according to a Western Oklahoma social media page requesting prayers for a fellow firefighter, suffered 2nd and 3rd degree burns and remains hospitalized, reportedly in a Kansas City hospital.

During Meng's update to the Commission, she explained that two homes were evacuated, and credited the firefighters who, despite strong winds, kept the fire from causing only minor damage to the outside siding of one of the two homes.

Meng, who said Red Cross is assisting homeowners with exterior and smoke damage, also credited the assistance of the area farmers who volunteered their services.