

Wildfires plague Central Florida

by UPI

ORLANDO, Fla. -- Damage is estimated at nearly \$10 million for brush fires that swept through Brevard County, Florida damaging and destroying more than 160 homes. One veteran firefighter said he was stunned after seeing some of the damage in Palm Bay where crews were continuing to put out hot spots and mopping up areas late Tuesday, WKMG-TV, Orlando, reported. Statewide, more than 100 fires were reported burning Tuesday. Palm Bay police early Wednesday arrested Brian Crowder, 31, on suspicion of starting at least one of the fires, which again closed Interstate-95, the Orlando Sentinel reported. Gov. Charlie Crist toured Central Florida with the state's agriculture commissioner. Damage from the brush fires was said to resemble that of a tornado because the flames burned some homes to the ground while leaving others untouched. Two hotels and two trailer parks were evacuated in the town of Cocoa after a brush fire estimated to involve 15 acres broke out east of Interstate 95 and began approaching the Lost Lake subdivision. Smoke from the fire forced authorities to close a portion of I-95. Shelters for residents evacuated from their homes were opened at a number of locations.

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