

S.C. wildfire burns 40 homes, 2,500 flee

by UPI

NORTH MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. -- A coastal South Carolina wildfire burned 40 homes, forcing 2,500 people to flee in the North Myrtle Beach area, officials said Thursday.

No injuries were reported.

City spokeswoman Nicole Aiello told the Myrtle Beach Sun-News that most of the homes were located at a beachfront resort west of the Intracoastal Waterway.

The fire sprang to life Wednesday afternoon and continued into Thursday. It had covered at least 8,500 acres, officials said, predicting the total area consumed was likely to grow as the day progressed.

South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford declared a state of emergency in Horry County.

"This has already proved to be a devastating event for Horry County, and it isn't over," the Sun-News quoted Sanford as saying. "This fire is continuing to spread, and it's incredibly important that people near the affected area pay close attention to emergency announcements and news outlets about developments with this disaster."

Horry County officials said about 200 people had checked into a shelter at a fitness center and smoke in the area forced schools to close.

The cause of the fire, which also threatened a golf course, hadn't been determined.

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