

Wildfire burns on Catalina Island

by UPI

AVALON, Calif. - A brush fire on Catalina Island off the coast of southern California Thursday was headed toward Avalon, the isle's only town.

The fire was reported at 12:30 p.m. and by late afternoon had spread across 400 acres of the 76-mile-square island, the Los Angeles Times reported.

A hovercraft from the Marine base at Camp Pendleton was being used to bring firefighters from the mainland. Firefighters also used planes to drop retardant on the flames.

In Avalon, which has a permanent population of about 3,500, many residents and tourists were heading for the beach. Lisa Bradley, owner of a bike rental shop, told the Times she was going to close down as soon as a few bicycles were returned.

"I'm going to get things from my house and come back closer to the beach," she said. "You can see the flames on the hill now."

About 85 percent of Catalina is a natural reserve. Avalon, which covers only two square miles on the southeastern end, is surrounded by a dirt road, which authorities hope will serve as a fire break.

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