

some of the Bureau of Land Management land. We have to take a look to see what we should be doing about that.

Should we leave that independent kind of situation waiting around for a fire of this magnitude or should we begin some orderly process of doing some things that will clean it up a bit and make it a little more safe? I opt for the latter.

I hope there will be some detailed hearings about that because I believe something should be done.

I understand the Senate is going into recess for the Republican and Democratic lunches. But I am not in charge of that time, unless leadership wants me to do something in that regard.

I yield the floor and thank the Senate.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, is there a unanimous consent agreement?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is a unanimous consent agreement that we recess for the caucus meetings.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, starting at what time?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. At 12:30.

#### EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to extend that for 1 minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Chair recognizes the Senator from Idaho for 1 minute.

#### FIRES IN NEW MEXICO

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I wanted to respond to the senior Senator from New Mexico and his colleagues who have just spoken. All of us have watched with great concern as this fire has caused such devastation in the mountains of New Mexico and around Los Alamos.

I chair the Subcommittee on Forestry and Public Lands. For the last decade we have known as a country that our forests are rapidly growing unhealthy, largely because we have not managed them as skillfully as we should. In areas that are natural and left to be natural, we understand not touching them. But where we have forests in what we call urban interface today, where houses are built amongst the trees, there ought to be an aggressive effort to keep fuel loading down and to disperse trees in such a way as to disallow these kinds of crises from developing. It is happening now in New Mexico because of a major error on the part of a Federal agency.

We literally have millions and millions of acres of forested public lands around this country in an unsatisfactory condition, as in the mountains of the great State of New Mexico, and one spark, one lightning strike, or one

human match could cost millions of dollars, lose thousands of homes, and the land that it touches, it destroys for a generation.

Oftentimes much greater environmental damage is done trying to put out these fires than an organized manner of managing the land, to control fuel loading, and those types of things that are now evident in New Mexico.

We will work with the Senators from New Mexico. Those hearings will be timely. There should be a report out by this Thursday that will give us some indication of cause.

The Senator from New Mexico is absolutely right: There should be extensive hearings on how and why it happened. Are there other areas where this could happen across these United States?

I thank the Senator for his comments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I have an article from the Albuquerque Journal that talks about a marvelous man, Alton J. Posey, 68 years old. Essentially, this 68-year-old retired man knew a lot about forests and mountains. That was his job. He went out to save his mountain house, which was his dream—a two-story log cabin in the mountains. He doused himself with water, took his water hose, and stayed there and kept that house from burning while things burned all around him.

I ask unanimous consent that the story explaining his life and what he did be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(See Exhibit 1.)

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, there is a little town named Weed, NM, which was hit by this fire. Terrible damage was done. It is on the other side of the State in the southern section.

There is a detailed Associated Press account by Chaka Ferguson that explains the details about that small town and what happened.

I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(See Exhibit 2)

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I thank the Senate in advance for the generosity that it is going to show, as it always does for those who suffer a disaster in this country.

I want to say to New Mexicans that the Senate won't let you down this time either. We are going to do what we have to do to organize it properly, put it in the right hands, and make all of you out there in New Mexico whole, rebuild that lab where it needs to be built, and make it safer where it ought to be safe so it can continue its marvelous work in behalf of peace and freedom as it has done for so many decades.

I yield the floor.

#### EXHIBIT 1

#### EX-FIREMAN SAVES HOME FROM SCOTT ABLE BLAZE

#### RETIREE PREVAILS OVER FIRE—ONE-MAN BATTLE SAVES WEED HOME

(By Rene Romo)

WEED.—The Scott Able Fire was raging on Agua Chiquita Road west of this tiny village, but 68-year-old Alton J. Posey was determined to protect his house, a two-story log cabin he built for his retirement.

With an old firefighter's helmet perched on his head and his pants drenched with water, Posey used a garden hose to battle flare-ups.

He managed to save his dream house, but at least 15 other houses and structures burned to the ground a few hundred yards away in nearby Wayland Canyon and along Agua Chiquita on Thursday night.

"Everything at the end of the rainbow for me was at the bottom of his hill," Posey said Saturday of his 11-acre property, a preserve surrounded by blackened trees and incinerated homes. "At 68 years old, you're too old to start again. And if a guy is determined and he knows he's right, you can't whip him."

Firefighters on Sunday had the 20,717-acre blaze, which cut a swath about 20 miles wide from Scott Able Canyon east to the Sacramento and Weed area, about 50 percent contained, fire information officer Kris Fister said.

The fire was believed to have been sparked by a downed power line in a 4-H camp about 16 miles south of Cloudcroft.

Fed by wind gusts, the fire churned across the Sacramento Mountains in the Lincoln National Forest, covering nearly 20 miles Thursday night and Friday morning.

Along Agua Chiquita, the fire left charred refrigerators and well pumps standing amid aluminum siding twisted like noodles. At some homes, trucks sat on their wheel rims because the tires were roasted away.

Milder winds Saturday and Sunday limited the blaze mainly to ground fires and gave more than 300 firefighters from around the West a chance to build a perimeter and douse hot spots with five helicopters and six air tankers.

According to a preliminary estimate, the Scott Able Fire destroyed 20 residences, 16 structures such as garages and sheds, and six automobiles.

Among those who lost houses in Wayland Canyon were two of Posey's neighbors, Maggie Bailey and Weed postmaster Francis Visser. Posey allowed them to stay in his home while they figure out what to do next.

Bailey moved to the area from Wisconsin two years ago with her truck-driver husband, who was on the road during the blaze. Bailey said she lost a motorhome, a small cabin and a motorboat. She managed to save two cars and her pets—a dog and two cats.

"I think I want to go back where there's more moisture," a dazed Bailey said Saturday evening "What can you do? You just . . . do."

Otero County sheriff's deputy Sgt. Jeff Farmer also lost his home.

"It's the little things you miss," said Farmer, who was working a roadblock leading into Weed off N.M. 24 on Saturday. He had been working almost nonstop since the fire erupted Thursday evening. "Yesterday morning, I didn't own anything."

Posey said "it sounded like 10 trains" when the blaze roared down the mountain-side behind his house, consuming 80-foot-tall pine trees.

The former Artesia firefighter thoroughly drenched his log cabin with a garden hose as the fire advanced Thursday. Later that