

Corpus Christi Caller Times

Firefighters battle brush fire at former uranium mining operation in Kleberg County

By Rick Spruill

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RICARDO — Firefighters are working to contain a brush fire at a former uranium mining operation in Kleberg County near Ricardo.

An official with Uranium Resources, Inc. confirmed that the Ricardo Fire Department is at the scene fighting the blaze, which is being fueled by near 40 mph winds.

The site, once an in-situ uranium mining operation, currently is in the reclamation process, meaning it is no longer an active mine, said Rick Van Horn, senior vice president of operations for the company.

“Right now, what’s burned is just a lot of grass and some plastic PVC pipe that, most recently, was filled with water used in the reclamation process,” he said.

He said the mine, a mostly-underground operation whose only landmarks are a few aboveground water tanks and a small operator’s shed, has not been in use since 2008.

Brush fire at former Uranium mine operation extinguished, without radiation concern, Kleberg officials said

By Mike Baird

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RICARDO — A brush fire inside a former Uranium mining operation in Kleberg County, near Ricardo, was extinguished about 1:30 a.m. Wednesday, Kleberg County Sheriff's Office officials said.

Sheriff's deputies had closed portions of two roads to traffic late Tuesday as firefighters with Ricardo Fire Department fought the blaze. Those portions of Farm-to-Market roads 1118 and 772 have been reopened, sheriff's officials said.

The fire was contained in the well field, said Rick Van Horn, senior vice president of operations for the company, which is not an active mine.

"There's no danger of radiation," Van Horn said. "The only thing that burned, other than grass, was some plastic pipe." The PVC pipe was most recently filled with water, he said.

The company tested soil samples after the fire and found nothing of concern, Van Horn said.

Texas Commission for Environmental Quality also took samples for testing, he said.

Brush fire at former uranium mine operation flares up again, Kleberg officials say

By Mike Baird

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RICARDO — A brush fire inside a former Uranium mining operation near Ricardo in Kleberg County that firefighters extinguished early this morning flared up again around lunchtime.

Kleberg County Sheriff's Office officials confirmed the flare-up but had no further details as of 1:05 p.m.

However, a Texas Commission on Environmental Quality field employee at the site reported the fire has again been extinguished, said Lisa Wheeler, commission spokeswoman.

The original blaze started late Tuesday evening and, fed by 40 mph winds, continued until about 1:30 a.m. Wednesday, when firefighters with the Ricardo Fire Department put it out.

Portions of Farm-to-Market roads 1118 and 772 were closed during the fire.

The fire was contained in the well field, said Rick Van Horn, senior vice president of operations for Uranium Resources Inc., the company responsible for the site. Uranium Resources Inc. operated an in-situ mining operation at the site until 2008.

"There's no danger of radiation," Van Horn said. "The only thing that burned, other than grass, was some plastic pipe."

Wheeler said the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality took air quality readings at the site and found no evidence of radiation or other harmful contaminants.

Staff writer Rick Spruill contributed to this story.