

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Five members of the volunteer fire departments in Imperial and Lamar responded to a mutual aid call in north-central Nebraska last week, where some of the worst fires in the state's history burned.

All three fires burning are 90 or 100 percent under control, as emergency workers breathe a sigh of relief.

The fires started July 20 when lightning struck the dry grass.

Aaron Greene, Duane Todd, Bryan Dannatt and Greg Dannatt were on the scene from the Imperial Volunteer Fire Department, while Tyler Stanley represented the Lamar Volunteer Fire Department.

Greene said all five of the firefighters from here worked on the Wentworth fire, which eventually burned 6,373 acres east of the major Fairfield fire.

Greene said they worked to hold the fire line near some trees in heavily wooded canyons. Last Tuesday, July 24, their first day on the scene, the crew worked a 12-hour shift from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

They returned home last Wednesday afternoon after putting in another five and a half hours of work.

Greene said it was a good experience. The crew faced very extreme temperatures and some very challenging canyons full of trees.

According to an update early this week from the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the two smaller fires (Wentworth and Hall) were at 90 percent containment. The major Fairfield fire was 100 percent contained.

Several of the burned areas continue to be patrolled. There are no longer any roads closed and no evacuations are in place.

In all, the three fires combined burned a total of 75,872 acres (Fairfield 66,745, Wentworth 6,373, Hall 2,754).

On Monday, the Rocky Mountain Incident Management Team that had been called in to manage the fire turned control back to local authorities.

In the end, the fires also destroyed 14 residences and 17 associated outbuildings.

Imperial and Lamar were among the 100 volunteer fire departments that responded as part of the mutual aid.