

# Chance of rain brings hope to Colorado firefighters

CANON CITY, Colo. (AP) — A chance of more rain accompanying cooler weather brought hope Tuesday to firefighters battling a 4,400-acre blaze that has destroyed at least 85 homes in south-central Colorado.

Hundreds of firefighters worked to extend a containment line around the fire burning through parched trees and brush in mountains south of Canon City, about 100 miles southwest of Denver.

A strong cold front moved through the area overnight, bringing higher humidity, lower temperatures and a chance of afternoon thunderstorms, Bureau of Land Management spokeswoman Barb Masinton said Tuesday.

"There's still a risk to homes," she said. "But this weather certainly is making a big difference."

The fire was just 10 percent to 20 percent surrounded Tuesday. Authorities had said Monday that it was up to 40 percent contained, but they said Tuesday that the number had been recalculated.

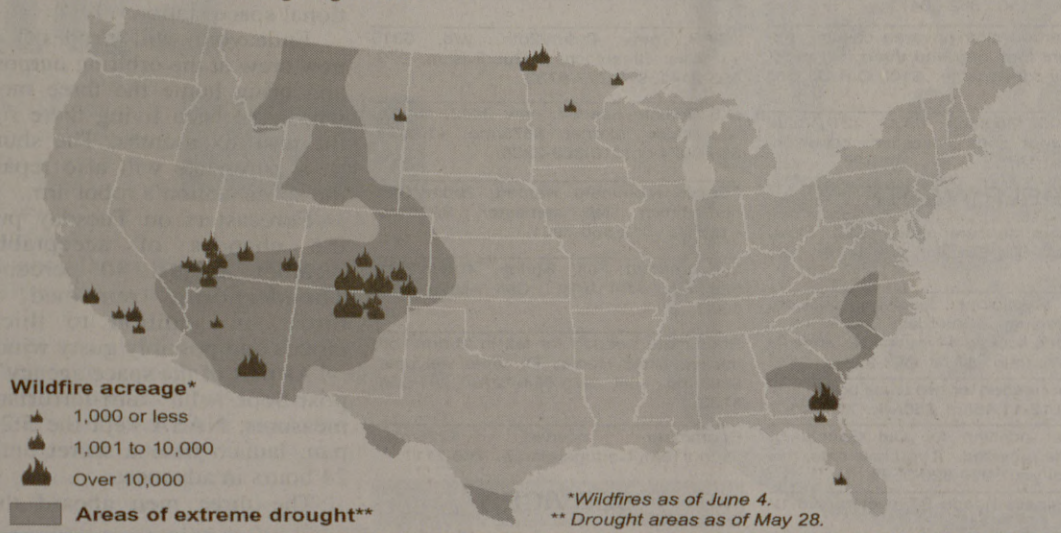
One of several burning throughout the West, the fire forced hundreds of people out of their homes and closed Royal Gorge Park, west of Canon City. A general store, up to 100 homes and several other buildings were destroyed, and up to 700 more homes were at risk, fire officials said.

Fremont County Sheriff Ivan Middlemiss said the fire may have been started by an outdoor barbecue grill.

Four air tankers dropped fire retardant on the blaze Monday. Fire commander Kim Martin said there is stiff competition for use of the planes because of the number of fires burning in the West, but she said this fire

## Drought provides fuel for the fires

Wildfire activity continues across the country with over 1.2 million acres burned already this year, nearly twice the 10-year average. The majority of active wildfires are in the Southwest, where persistent drought conditions have made firefighting difficult.



remains a top priority.

"As long as houses are threatened, we're competitive," Martin said.

Torched-out areas resembled a moonscape, Middlemiss said. He said charred trees and blackened houses were next to other houses with no damage.

In Las Animas County, bordering New Mexico, a 4,800-acre fire damaged at least one home and forced the evacuation of 11 ranches and three other homes near Trinidad.

A separate fire of about 15,000 acres in the same area threatened three communities and had burned across some methane-gas fields, fire information officer Alan Hoffmeister said. The gas wells were shut down and the pipelines were drained, he said.

In California, flames crackled across more than 9,000 acres

of timber and brush as firefighters continued to wage an all-out assault on five wildfires. Unlike in Colorado, the weather forecast was not improving.

Several structures and a trailer were destroyed, but no homes were lost or threatened in blazes raging in Los Padres, San Bernardino, Sequoia and Angeles national forests. Three minor injuries to firefighters were reported.

The largest fire, north of Ojai in Ventura County, burned across 6,200 acres by early Tuesday. It was being fought by 21 helicopters and air tankers that dumped water and retardant on flames in support of 1,234 firefighters working to surround the flames.

"The weather isn't looking good for the next couple of days," said Joe Pasinato of the U.S. Forest Service. "We have 8

percent humidity, 25 mph wind and 85 degree temperatures."

In New Mexico, six lightning-sparked fires have charred more than 18,500 acres of bone-dry forest. That includes the northern fire that burned into Colorado's Las Animas County.

A 4,440-acre fire in northern New Mexico's Mora County prompted evacuations of seven to eight homes in the Naranjo area, while a 500-acre fire on the Vermejo Ranch in Cimarron Canyon led the state Forestry Division to recommend that residents of Cimarron leave the area.

Fire crews in southern Arizona were mopping up areas burned by a 30,000-acre wildfire in the Coronado National Forest. The fire was burning in an unoccupied area and no structures were threatened.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### ACLU files lawsuit against airlines for discrimination

NEW YORK (AP) — The American Civil Liberties Union filed five lawsuits Tuesday accusing airlines of illegally removing passengers who looked Middle Eastern.

The lawsuits, filed in California, Maryland and New Jersey, said five men were removed from flights last year because of their skin color. Four of the passengers are U.S. citizens and the fifth is a permanent legal resident. Two of the five are of Arab descent.

ACLU attorney Reginald Shuford blamed poor airline policies drawn up to respond to the threat of terrorism since Sept. 11.

### Children of Sept. 11 victims will be tracked for two years

NEW YORK (AP) — A group of children who lost parents in the Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Center will be tracked for two years by psychiatrists studying grief and its effect on child development.

Seven children — whose parents were firefighters, police officers and office workers killed in the twin towers — so far are participating in the study, which began last month at Weill Medical College of Cornell University's Childhood Bereavement Program.

Researchers hope to attract about 50 families, according to Dr. Cynthia Pfeffer, a professor of psychiatry who has extensively studied childhood bereavement.

"We're going to be evaluating them at six-month intervals on their emotional, physical and social development," Pfeffer said. "There is very little information about child bereavement, and the loss of a parent is one of the most major stresses a child can experience."

## Research contends biases present in medical journals

CHICAGO (AP) — One of the world's leading medical journals has put itself and its competitors under the microscope with research showing that published studies are sometimes misleading and frequently fail to mention weaknesses.

Some problems can be traced to biases and conflicts of interest among peer reviewers, who are outside scientists tapped by journal editors to help decide whether a research paper should be published, according to several articles in this week's Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).

Other problems originate in news releases some journals prepare to call attention to what they believe are newsworthy studies. The releases do not routinely mention study limitations or industry funding and may exaggerate the importance of findings, according to one JAMA study.

Wednesday's JAMA, devoted entirely to such issues, "is our attempt to police ourselves, to question ourselves and to look at better ways to make sure that we're honest and straightforward and maintain the integrity of the journals," said Dr. Catherine DeAngelis, JAMA's editor.

The articles "underscore that the findings presented in the press and medical journals are not always facts or as certain as they seem," said Rob Logan, director of the Science Journalism Center at the

University of Missouri-Columbia.

DeAngelis said problems are most likely to occur in research funded by drug companies, which have a vested interest in findings that make their products look good.

Journal editors are concerned that manufacturers sometimes unduly influence how researchers report study results, and even suppress unfavorable findings.

Many top journals require researchers to disclose any ties to drug companies, and Dr. Jeffrey Drazen, editor of the New England Journal of Medicine, said editors rely on researchers to be truthful.

"I imagine that from time to time we screw up" and fail to adequately mention drug company ties, but that is infrequent, Drazen said.

One JAMA report found that medical journal studies on new treatments often use only the most favorable statistic in reporting results, said author Dr. Jim Nuovo of the University of California at Davis.

His study reviewed 359 studies published between 1989 and 1998 in JAMA, The New England Journal of Medicine, The Lancet, the British Medical Journal and Annals of Internal Medicine. Only 26 studies reported straightforward statistics that clearly assessed the effect on patients.

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— Dr. Jeffrey Drazen  
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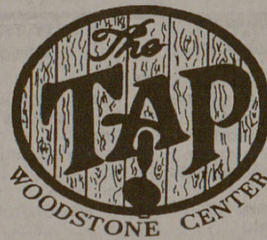
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