

Faithful

By LEN IWANSKI
Associated Press Writer

WEST YELLOWSTONE — Yellowstone National Park officials remained optimistic today about defending the Old Faithful geyser complex despite a weather forecast calling for winds to act like a bellows on wildfires in the park.

The 142,000-acre North Fork fire burning several miles to the west of Old Faithful would be whipped toward the complex if gusting winds reaching 30 mph out of the southwest materialized.

"So if we do get those predicted winds we could have some problems there, but I think we have a good chance," Bob Barbee, Yellowstone National Park superintendent, said this morning on NBC-TV's "Today" show.

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STEVE DOWELL/CHRONICLE

A sign by the Grizzly Lodge in Silver Gate shows a sense of humor as tired firefighters from Orange County, Calif., relax Monday.

Mormon volunteers called in to 'irrigate' Old Faithful

By ELIZABETH LADEN
Chronicle Staff Writer

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WEST YELLOWSTONE — Mormon volunteers were installing another irrigation system today after they were asked to help defend Old Faithful against a wildfire burning 2.5 miles west of Yellowstone National Park's famous geyser.

High winds expected this afternoon could blow burning debris from fingers of the North Fork fire onto structures and power equipment in the Old Faithful area, fire information officer Andy Sanchez said this morning.

The Mormons were asked to help wet down power lines and a power transfer station near Old Faithful, he said.

Clyde Seely, a West Yellowstone business owner and local church leader, said the North Fork fire incident commander called him around 10:30 p.m. Monday to ask for help wetting down the power equipment.

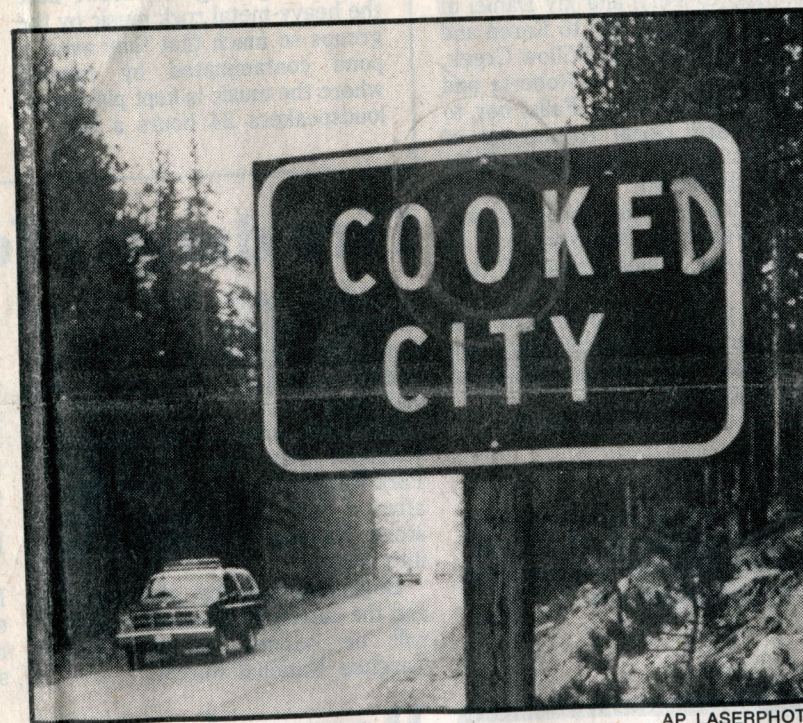
Church members from Idaho are donating 3,600 feet of 6-inch irrigation pipe and 1,500 feet of 8-inch pipe, a pump and more than a mile of irrigation line.

"He asked me if I could have men and equipment there this morning," Seely said.

Seely said fire managers are concerned that if the power goes out at Old Faithful, winter operations there could be shut down.

"That would be devastating to us," Seely said, because West Yellowstone's winter economy relies heavily on business from snowmobilers who travel between town and Old Faithful.

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AP LASERPHOTO

A prankster added a "D" to the Cooke City city limits sign as residents evacuated the area threatened by the Storm Creek fire.