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Crew waits for action

Old Faithful firefighters kill time as blazes rage

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By SCOTT McMILLION
Chronicle Staff Writer

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, Wyo. — Bored firefighters at Old Faithful had little to do Thursday besides snooze, play Frisbee and wait for meals.

"We got up, we ate, we came here, we stayed. We watched smoke," said Phil Meads, fire boss for a five-man pumper crew from San Bernadino, Calif., which was "on call" for the 8,900-acre North Fork Fire burning out of control five miles west of Old Faithful.

Meads and his crew, along with

35 other pumper crews from around the West, had assembled in the parking lot behind the Old Faithful Inn, ready to defend the structures in the complex if necessary.

"We checked our gear several times today," explained Meads, who has eight years of experience as a firefighter. "We have sharpened our tools repeatedly."

"If we sharpen them any more we might go back to California with nothing but handles," added one of Meads' crew members.

Fat raindrops began pelting the crews as they lounged around their trucks Thursday afternoon, tossed

Frisbees, read or played hackey-sack. Meads opened his palm to catch a raindrop.

"More than likely, they can let us go now to somewhere they can use us. I'm ready to go somewhere where there is a purpose for us," said Meads as he climbed from the back of his 500-gallon pumper.

Unlike the firefighters stationed at Grant Village this week, many of the firefighters called in to protect Old Faithful have seen little or no action. Cool weather, higher humidity and a few scattered rainstorms

See CREW, page 14



ALBERT DICKSON/CHRONICLE

Tom Moore, foreground, and Jim Giblin, firefighters from San Bernadino, Calif., bide their time near Old Faithful Thursday, a slow day for firefighters.

"We're glad to have them but this rain isn't doing much for my morale. My sleeping bag is out there getting wet."

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