

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

Hardly a day goes by that we don't hear, or read, about wildfires throughout the nation. As of last Saturday, August Seventeenth, there were forty fires burning in the western states. Causes of many of these fires remain under investigation. I admire those investigating fire officials. It's a tough job. Of those wildfires that are manmade, it becomes difficult, if not impossible to identify the culprits. Without solid proof, the investigator is pretty much unable to carry the case to its conclusion. I don't have any numbers to tell me if wildfires are on the increase over the past few years, whether they have stayed the same or if they have decreased. There is another factor, and it is a scary one, that enters into the arson caused fires. That is the possibility of wild fires started by terrorists. Last year, it was reported on ABC news, and other news outlets, that the terrorist group Al Qaeda has on-line websites suggesting, and describing in detail, how to build ember bombs, how to study wooded areas and weather maps for dangerous fire conditions. We think of a terrorist action as a huge earth shaking event such as the attack on the Twin Towers which caused death, property loss, financial loss and misery (not necessarily in that order). Forest fires happen every year and we accept these as unfortunate events to be dealt with. What are the after effects of a wild fire? Possible deaths, (sixteen fire fighters lost their lives in just one event), property loss, financial loss and misery (not necessarily in that order) and other problems arise such as the dangerous and sometimes lengthy responses for the fire fighter, the loss of wild life we try so hard to protect, as well as the potential loss of domestic animals. Huge land areas develop where the public is exposed to smoke inhalation, bad for everyone especially the young and the elderly. A local example would be the recent evacuation of the inhabitants with health problems by one of the local Native American Tribes. They were moved over forty miles to be lodged in one of Eureka's hotels. None of that happens for free and I am sure there are like situations in many of the fire areas. All fires strike terror in the hearts of those who fall victim to the event and Al Qaeda is very willing to be a part of it. Is there proof that a terrorist organization is involved in any of the set fires? Not likely but it is foolish to ignore the possibility. Sweeping any possibility under the rug does not make it go away. Panic and frustration will not help. Whether you live in or visit a rural area be aware of your surroundings, report any fires and anyone acting suspicious nearby. Also practice fire prevention so you don't become a suspect.

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