

Farm, outbuildings spared in windstorm-driven prairie fire

By BRIAN WALKER/Staff Writer | Posted: Monday, September 12, 2016 12:00 am

POST FALLS — Firefighters averted a disaster when a Rathdrum Prairie farm house and outbuildings were spared during a hay field fire that spread to about 70 acres in 15 minutes during Sunday night's windstorm.

"We dodged a bullet," said Steven Isaacson, Kootenai County Fire and Rescue's EMS Division chief. "We didn't expect the wind to come up so fast."

Isaacson said a farmer told fire crews that the fire started with the hydraulic pump in a combine.

"Metal on metal in the combine sparked the fire," Isaacson said. "The field had just been cut, and one of the hay bales was destroyed."

The fire was reported around 5 p.m. along Greensferry Road north of Hayden Avenue and west of Highway 41. No structures were damaged.

Isaacson said the fire was "out of control" until it reached the southern end at Hayden Avenue.

"That's where fire crews were able to stop it from crossing Hayden and reaching the farm," Isaacson said. "We put out advanced fire lines to slow it. We estimated that the wind reached 30 mph during the height of the fire. Had the fire jumped Hayden a full farm would have gone. It was an amazing stop by the fire crews."

Some roads west of Highway 41 near the fire were shut down for about an hour and a half as fire crews from Northern Lakes and Hauser assisted KCFR.

The fire was under control around 6 p.m. and crews were still on scene after 7 p.m. mopping up.

"The wind was driving so hard that we don't want to let the fire go again," Isaacson said.

Smoke from the fire could be seen throughout the prairie.

"We traveled up to Riverview south of the river south of Post Falls on smoke checks because residents up there were concerned," Isaacson said. "Smoke on the north end of the prairie had travelled all that way."