

Rockhampton bushfire sparks evacuations

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Residents of a Rockhampton suburb are being urged to evacuate their homes as a "terrifying" bushfire threatens properties in the central Queensland city.

The fire has been burning in Mt Archer National Park for several days and has already destroyed one unoccupied house at Lakes Creek in the Mt Archer area, east of Rockhampton.

Authorities believe the fire could have been deliberately lit.

About 11am (AEST) on Sunday, residents of the Rockhampton suburb of Frenchville were told to leave their homes.

They, along with hundreds of residents in Koongal and Lakes Creek and in other Mt Archer areas on Saturday had been told to evacuate their homes if safe to do so.

The fire service said it expected structures to be lost and "strongly advised" residents to leave the area.

Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) Acting Assistant Commissioner Paul Adcock on Sunday said the wind had changed, putting homes in the Bloxsom Street area of Frenchville in danger.

"People who live in those particular areas, if they feel safe to leave, they should do so now," Mr Adcock told ABC Radio.

"That's the safest option and that's the option we recommend people should take."

QFRS Commissioner Lee Johnson said the "terrifying" fire was fanned by erratic winds and could have been deliberately lit.

"We do have suspicions about its origin, but at this stage we can't pinpoint it exactly," he said.

Acting Premier Andrew Fraser said it was remarkable more homes had not been lost.

"There is every reason for all of us to be hugely grateful for the fantastic efforts of the fire service and the volunteers in central Queensland," he said.

"It is a miracle that more homes weren't lost."

Mr Fraser urged people to observe the fire bans in place and said because conditions were so dry, any spark could start a major blaze.

With up to 50 fires burning around the state and 27 days straight of firefighting, crews were already being pushed to the limits, he said.

"We need to absolutely reinforce to everybody that this is a situation in many parts of the state that does not need another idiot to start another fire," Mr Fraser said.

Rockhampton Mayor Brad Carter said he had spotted up to 15 fires he believed had been deliberately lit along Emu Park Road on Sunday.

"They were about a couple of kilometres apart and they had started at the roadside," he told ABC Radio.

About 100 firefighters are working in the Mt Archer area with water bombing and backburning to continue, while reinforcements have been sent from Brisbane.

Arrangements are also being made for the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) to relieve Queensland crews this week if necessary.

Police have closed Emu Park Road at the Cawarral Road and Nerimbera School Road intersections, and Yeppoon Road between Norman Road and Cawarral Road.

Motorists travelling from the coast to Rockhampton are asked to take Yeppoon Road, Artillery Road and Green Lake Road before getting back on to the Bruce Highway and to exercise caution and patience in the area.

Other serious fires around the state include blazes in the Bundaberg and Maryborough hinterlands, but no homes there are threatened.

A third of the state is under fire bans until midnight on Monday, which may be extended if dangerous fire conditions continue.