

NORTHLAND VILLAGE OF HOYT LAKES EVACUATED DUE TO WILDFIRES

Richfield, MN - (05.09.16) - Avinity Senior Living (“Avinity”) thanks staff and volunteers from the region for quick, calm response to evacuation notice.

On Friday, May 6, 2016, wildfires in the northern region of Minnesota threatened the town of Hoyt Lakes and caused the evacuation of Northland Village of Hoyt Lakes, an Avinity assisted living community of 18 residents and 24 staff.

The U.S. Forest Service said that initial reports of fires were received around 3:00 p.m. on Friday afternoon, the most significant being near Skibo, an unincorporated settlement southeast of Hoyt Lakes. At the time, it was estimated several small fires covered about 100 acres but were growing quickly due to gusty winds, extremely dry conditions and low humidity. By early evening local officials advised staff at Northland Village, which is located on the eastern edge of Hoyt Lakes, to evacuate as a precautionary measure.



An aerial view of the wildfire east of Hoyt Lakes on May 6, 2016.
(Photo courtesy of U.S. Forest Service)

Residents of Northland Village were moved safely to the Aurora Community Center thanks to the leadership of R.N., Manager, Camille Coy and the quick and professional assistance of Northland Village staff, family members and local volunteers, along with help from other Avinity staff and sites. Director of Nursing, Laura Lokken, drove in from Duluth and Ward Etter, Regional Maintenance Supervisor for LEE Center and the Northland Village properties, came in from Hibbing to assist. Jon Lanyk, Maintenance Technician for LEE Center and Northland Village of Buhl, fire fighter and EMT answered the call for help and met Ward onsite. Denyse Ethridge, Avinity Vice President for Care, Culture and Operations supported the effort from the Twin Cities with calls to staff at other Avinity locations. Teams at Northland Village of Buhl and McGregor as well as Golden Oaks were preparing to accommodate displaced residents as necessary.

Dale Fagre, Avinity CEO said, “I am truly amazed, but not surprised, by the heroic efforts of so many members of the Avinity family in response to this urgent event. I am proud of how our staff members put our residents first and brought the Avinity Experience to life in real time! It is an honor to be associated with each of you.”

“Thank you to Camille Coy and the entire Northland Village of Hoyt Lakes staff, as well as John Williams, Laura Lokken, Ward Etter, Jon Lanyk, Denyse Ethridge, Tayomi Bloom, Mary Casarez and all who dropped what they were doing to help where ever necessary in serving our precious older adults.”

The residents and staff were able to return to Northland Village of Hoyt Lakes by 10:30 p.m. Friday evening. As of Sunday afternoon, wildfires continued to burn in the Skibo area and it was estimated they covered about 1,000 acres and were twelve percent contained. More than 300 people from 12 states are now fighting the fires and the National Weather Service is onsite to provide regular updates. The interagency team coordinating the efforts hopes rainfall later in the week will help dampen the blazes. Continuing coverage can be found online at DuluthNewsTribune.com.

The following letter was received from a resident of Northland Village of Hoyt Lakes after the incident.

“An Orderly Movement of the Elderly”

On May 6th, 2016, the order was given to evacuate our village. The time was 7:11 p.m. I was getting ready to hear a Twins game with shoes off and in a relaxing mode. I hurriedly got dressed for the move. We were told it was a precautionary move. We smelled the smoke of a distant fire. It was without panic, stay calm. The group took the news in stride. Naturally, there were many questions but they were answered with their safety in mind and room by room was all accounted for. We left the building to wait for 3 buses to take the group out of harm’s way. Very orderly we entered the bus and sat down. The haze lingered, the windows on the bus told us it was time to leave. As the buses pulled away I said a prayer, obvious thing to do, for as we needed human help, we also needed that spiritual help as well. After we settled into safety in Aurora, many thoughts of gratitude that we were all safe. Back home again. What a lovely thought. Amen.”

*- A current resident of
Northland Village of Hoyt Lakes*

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