

The Seminole Producer

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Mulch Fire Threatens Wewoka Residents *New Product Shows Impressive Results*



Firefighters Test Product on Mulch Fire

Lou Armour
City Editor

Since Monday an industrial-sized mulch pile just south of Wewoka City limits has been burning and threatening to blow hot embers towards the residents north of the huge pile. Standing at over 30-40 feet high and over 200-250 feet long in places, the pile of mulch made from lumber spontaneously combusted on June 24 at a lot on the corner of Jack Rabbit Rd. and Industrial Blvd.

Fire Chief James Keesee and his men had been at the site over the past three days fighting the fire, but were at a loss at how to get to the center of the blaze without kicking up cinders. They doused one end of the pile with over 2000 gallons of water with no apparent lasting effect.

Keesee also tried firefighting foam but the core of the blaze was far deeper than the foam could penetrate. He called for help from the Oklahoma Forestry Services and was given a lead on a commercial product that was designed specifically for such a stubborn fire.

New Product Shows Impressive Results

Keesee contacted a fire chief acquaintance in Louisiana who was familiar with peat bog fires. He suggested EnvironX Solutions of Dallas, Texas.

James called EnvironX Solutions and asked about "Peat FireX," a product developed for peat fires.

EnvironX CEO Steve Sinunu arrived in Wewoka Thursday night with as much of the product as he could carry in a pickup truck,

approximately 750 pounds of it in 25-lb. buckets to demonstrate its efficacy in extinguishing just this kind of fire.

For the test, they mixed up 600 gallons for the brushfire trucks brought in from the fire department. One pound of the non-toxic product mixed with water makes 20 gallons. Armed with 300 gallons each in two brushfire trucks, Keesee's men turned to a smaller section of the mulch fire to test Peat FireX.

Keesee took initial readings of the surfaces in the test section and found it to be between 350-400 degrees Fahrenheit.

After a coating of the non-toxic product, the temperatures dropped to 150 degrees and down to 125 degrees 15 minutes later. Within 30 minutes, Keesee was able to put his hand to surface of the mulch pile without suffering burns or discomfort.

Selecting another test section next to the treated site, a firefighter hosed down a 30-foot by 20-foot section with water.

With an initial reading of 400 degrees, the water treated site registered a mere drop of 50 degrees before temperatures rose again 30 minutes later.

In the meantime the Peat FireX treated site continued to cool down and passersby could distinctly feel the temperature difference between the two sections - the heat from the water treated section was palpable from a distance of 5-10 feet. The amount of the organic product used on the test site was only 150 gallons, compared to 2,000 gallons of water used on it the day before.

One firefighter doused his boots in the product and claimed he was able to withstand the heat of the pile to climb closer to fire affected areas.

Keesee used a tracked hoe to carve out a section of an untreated section to gauge the core temperature and to see what effect Peat FireX had on a hotter heat source. The hoe dug a large six-foot hole into the side of the mulch pile and a reading of the site was temps reaching over 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit. A firefighter doused the hole with the organic-based product for five minutes.

Keesee came back to the hole to find the temperature down to less than 150 degrees within seconds of being doused.

The core of the hole was cooling rapidly with smoke spilling out as the product worked closer to the source of the fire.

As one firefighter remarked, "we accomplished more in two hours with this product than we had over the past three days with water and foam."

According to the EnvironX Solutions website, Peat FireX is eco-friendly, non-toxic and biodegradable. Peat FireX reportedly breaks the surface tension of the soil and penetrates deep into peat and muck. It has stopped peat fires with significantly less water and resources, while leaving a lasting retardant barrier.

With Peat FireX, creek water, fair weather conditions, and hard work on the part of the Wewoka firefighters, this mulch pile fire may be extinguished in days rather than months.