Dear Comrades,

As we arrived to begin the school of instruction for the East Side on Aug 18th, the Medical Lake Complex fire had taken hold and a plume 3 miles high that loomed in the vicinity of Air Way Heights Post 3386. A 25 mile an hour wind swept down from Canada and pushed the Smoke and fanned the fire south and to the east jumping I-90 and causing the Hwy to be closed at 4 Lakes, eventually spreading, and causing the closure to go as far west as Sprague.

During this time fire spread into the Elk, WA area and added to the suffocating smoke wall surrounding the Spokane region….Elk is above 12,000 acres without containment and the Medical Lake Complex is greater than 13,000 acres with about 10 percent containment.

The current situation is still very confusing however, the fire chief has addressed that this will possibly continue for another week to ten days before control is firmly and completely established.

Our biggest concern is that Spokane is home to thousands of Air Force troops at Fairchild Air Force Base as well as the multitude of retired military living in the area. We have established an in-state donation link for the Posts and Districts statewide to assist with donations to keep the local area supplied with food, water and the necessary items needed at this time. The local support at this time will be sufficient for a period of maybe a week, but it is very hard to predict.

  We here know personally of 6 veterans that have lost their homes in the past three days, the State Leadership are expecting this number to grow until control can be maintained across the area.  Having spent the past three days there in person, we can attest that although everyone is attempting to stay together and get through this, many are having their life torn apart knowing that any phone call could be devastating news for them and their families.

  We have a strong Department, and everyone is doing whatever they can to get through this. Any & all assistance would be well received as the fire is now currently burning over an excess of 25,000 combined acres. Air-Index conditions approached 400 at times the past few days.

The State Chief of Staff Jerry Herker is the assigned focal for all aid. He will also communicate exactly what donated items will be needed in the near term. His communication on needs will come from the State Adjutant as news of needs becomes available. We are in conference with National VFW Headquarters for possible aid as well.

A donation application has been uploaded to the State Web Page for Post, Auxiliary and Personal Contributions.

Two souls have been lost so far in the past 3 days to the combined fires. Prayers for all are coveted, keep this region close to your heart for the near term.

//Original Signed//

Craig Dougherty

State Commander

Dept of Washington VFW