

Colorado Wildfire Is 'Bringing This City Together'

Several Christian publishers and companies in Colorado Springs, Colo., are rallying around wildfire victims devastated by the most destructive blaze in the state's history.

Since the Waldo Canyon Fire broke out Saturday, June 23, nearly 350 homes have burned to the ground, and it has cost \$8.8 million to battle so far, Associated Press (AP) reported. About 7,000 people were allowed to return to their homes for good last night, which would leave about 3,000 still evacuated—down from more than 30,000 at the peak of the fire, AP reported. The fire, which has killed two people, is now 55 percent contained after a long week of shifting winds that frustrated firefighters.

The mandatory evacuation of The Navigators and NavPress building, which was closed June 23 by city officials due to the wildfire, has been lifted, but it will take a few days to restore utilities and clean-up to allow occupancy, company officials said. The Navigators' Eagle Lake Camp is still under a mandatory evacuation.

"Thank you for your concern ... in light of the devastating wildfires that ravaged parts of Colorado Springs and the nearby mountains—including parts of our Eagle Lake Camp property," said a posting this weekend on NavPress' Facebook page. "While many of our losses will be covered by insurance, we anticipate uncovered needs among our staff and impacted facilities, including some whose homes have been lost. We have established a special fund to help us respond quickly to the needs created by this crisis. We trust fully in our God and His power to use these circumstances to help us advance the gospel as we press on to live and disciple among the lost."

David C. Cook Senior Publicity Manager Lisa Beech told *Christian Retailing* that two Cook employees lost their homes and nine others were evacuated. "Right now, employees are rallying together, and Cook is collecting gift cards from employees and giving gift cards to those [displaced] employees," she said. "The community, in general, has overloaded the evacuation centers with food, water and other items for evacuees. We know that God is at work and bringing this city together in a very special way."

Meanwhile, Focus on the Family co-sponsored the Wildfire Relief Benefit Concert at World Arena in Colorado Springs on Independence Day on Wednesday, to support victims of the fire, and recognize and honor the firefighters and emergency response teams. Featuring the Colorado Springs Philharmonic, along with appearances by the Flying W Wranglers, Michael Martin Murphey and Flash Cadillac, the free concert raised funds for fire relief efforts.

In a joint statement with John Weiss, publisher of the Colorado Springs Independent, Focus President and CEO Jim Daly said: "Fighting this fire, we are one community—together. ... We are united in reaching out to fire victims in their time of need and also honoring those risking their lives fighting this devastating tragedy."

WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group President Steve Cobb said four staff members were evacuated from their homes. "One lives in the neighborhood most directly devastated by the fire," he said. "At this moment, it is believed that her house survived, but she does not yet know if it is inhabitable. ... Staff members have opened their homes for evacuees and their animals. It is a period of time where everyone has pitched in, as well as prayed a lot."

Rick Christian, founder of Alive Communications, said two employees and an intern at his literary agency were evacuated, but were allowed back in their homes. "Three of the four

displaced families who were staying at our home in Colorado Springs were also allowed back in their homes and are fine," he said. "The fourth family had a home in the heavily devastated burn zone, but discovered their home is intact. Because they are surrounded by homes that burned to the ground, it will be a while yet until they are allowed back."