

Students cited in Bay Roberts blazes

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BAY ROBERTS — The fourth suspicious fire in three days swept through a new subdivision in Bay Roberts on Thursday afternoon causing considerable property damage to homes located between two schools.

The fire was reported shortly after 1 p.m. in a wooded area near Ascension collegiate and Amalgamated academy, which had to be evacuated for the second consecutive day.

Residents of nearby Adler Place were also forced to leave their homes when the threatening flames scorched lawns and melted siding. Some blamed the fires on school children and demanded action be taken.

Mayor Wilbur Sparkes said when he got to the scene he was met by a "wall of fire" on Adler Place forcing him to

turn back.

Most homes on the street are built on half-acre lots with mature trees, but Thursday's fire left many of them with nothing but blackened stumps.

Martin Gregory said the fire melted the siding off his house and caused considerable damage to the exterior walls of a neighbor's home.

William Butler's home was directly in the path of the blaze but escaped with minor damage.

Neighbors managed to keep the flames away until firefighters arrived, but he said he was very lucky. Flower pots on his patio were burned, and he had flaming embers all around his home.

Glen Bishop said neighbors also played a major part in saving his home.

Please see FIREFIGHTERS, page 2



SCOTT COURAGE/The Evening Telegram

A forest fire in a Bay Roberts subdivision made for some tense moments Thursday afternoon. Two homes on Adler Place suffered cracked windows and blistered, melted vinyl siding, as flames came within feet of many homes.

Firefighters credited with 'fantastic job'

Continued from page 1

The flames actually scorched part of his lawn, but people who live nearby hosed down the house and removed all the flammable materials from his garage.

Madonna Stoyles, who lives nearby on Long Lane, said it was a terrifying ordeal.

"I could see the flames approach and I could see feel nothing but terror," she said. "But I have to credit the firemen for a fantastic job."

Other people say action has to be

taken soon or the results will be devastating.

One man, who didn't want to be named, said he will be demanding a meeting with officials of the Avalon West School District.

"We've had four fires in three days and all are believed to have been set by school children," he said.

"We've had a lot of damage here today but nobody was killed and nobody's home was destroyed. But it's only a matter of time.

"This thing has to be investigated and the guilty persons should be brought to

justice. We'll be meeting as a neighborhood soon to discuss possible action."

An RCMP spokesman admitted the situation is starting to get out of hand. Thursday's forest fire was the ninth since May 1.

And while it was raging, others were reported in Clarke's Beach and Port de Grave.

The fire Thursday began near Ascension collegiate on the Conception Bay Highway and burned through a wooded area towards Adler Place.

It then leaped across Track Road towards Bishops Road, making it very

difficult to predict its path, one witness said.

The Bay Roberts fire department had also responded to two calls near Ascension collegiate and another near Amalgamated academy on Wednesday.

The blaze was fought by fire departments from Bay Roberts, Cupids, Spaniard's Bay, Upper Island Cove and Harbour Grace, as well as forestry officials who dispatched a helicopter to the area.

The combined effort resulted in the fire being brought under control within three hours.