

Local fire fighters battle Niobrara Valley blaze

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Wanted: Air transportation to Ainsworth

Members of the Gothenburg Volunteer Fire Department are in northern Nebraska fighting a massive wildfire in the Niobrara River Valley.

By Tuesday, more than 60,000 acres had burned, 10 structures destroyed and more threatened.

Local fire chief Mark Ballmer said Tuesday that the department sent one truck and a two-man crew to help battle the blaze.

“We’re going to rotate on 24 hour shifts by flying up crews to Ainsworth,” he said.

Ballmer said the department needs help with air transportation to do the rotations.

Pilot Rick Fiese flew the first rotation but more planes and pilots are needed, he said.

Contact Ballmer at 529-2972 about help with transportation or monetary donations to fund the flights.

Officials say lightning started the fire that has been burning for five days.

Sizzling temperatures, gusty winds and rugged terrain have made the fire difficult to contain.