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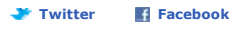
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Massachusetts Army National Guard helicopter to join firefighting efforts on Tekoa Mountain in Russell and Montgomery

By [George Graham, The Republican](#)
 April 12, 2010, 12:15PM



04.12.2010 | Photo by Michael S. Gordon / The Republican | Massachusetts Army National Guard helicopter crews drop water onto fires burning on the south side of Tekoa Mountain Monday near the border of Russell and Westfield.

RUSSELL – A Massachusetts Army National Guard helicopter has joined efforts Monday to put out a wind-fueled brush fire that has been burning on **Tekoa Mountain** for several days.



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"A lot of state resources are being brought to that mountain," said Jennifer L. Mieth, a spokeswoman for the state Fire Marshal's Office.

The fire is believed to have started Saturday. Firefighters reported early Sunday afternoon that it had been mostly contained to 10 acres on the mountain, but wind started spreading it again, according to state police.

Because the fire is not threatening any homes or other structures, firefighters decided to let it burn Sunday night and make sure it did not spread more, police said.

"It's still going pretty good," said state Trooper Justin Roberson, speaking from the Russell barracks about 6 a.m. Monday.

A rest stop, just over the Westfield line on Route 20 in Russell, is being used as a staging area for firefighting efforts. Heavy smoke could be seen from there as of about 11 a.m.

Easthampton Fire Chief David A Mottor, speaking briefly at that staging area early Monday afternoon, said that some 75 acres of woodland has burned so far.

Cause of the fire remains under investigation, Mottor said.

Also joining local firefighters are firefighters from the state Division of Conservation and Recreation and members of the state Department of Fire Services incident support service unit. Mieth said.

A state police helicopter is being used to direct firefighting efforts, Mieth said.

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Kurt N. Schwartz, Gov. Deval L. Patrick's undersecretary of the state Executive Office of Public Safety, will be arriving at the scene Monday to oversee firefighting efforts, Mieth said.

State police said the blaze is visible from the Massachusetts Turnpike.

Tekoa Mountain, steep and remote, is often hit by brush fires, especially this time of year when conditions can get extremely dry. A fire on the mountain in 1995 burned 587 acres. An even larger fire there four years later blackened more than 1,200 acres.

Russell Deputy Fire Chief John E. Murphy, 64, died of an apparent heart attack while fighting that April 1999 fire.

Westfield brush fire continues

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