

## The Overland Fire, 2003, Jamestown, CO and James & Lefthand Canyons

Very early in the morning of October 29, 2003, 80-90-mile per hour winds broke a 20-foot tall tree in a forested area just west of Jamestown. The tree fell onto a 13,200 volt power line, which snapped, fell to the ground, and started a wildfire. The fire grew quickly due to the high winds, and to firefighters' efforts being hampered by steep terrain and forest density.

Several hours later, an evacuation was ordered for Jamestown residents, although there was some confusion since few realized that the fire hall siren meant just that: Get out. Now.

News throughout that day and evening was sketchy for worried evacuees. At one point, they heard that the Post Office—located in the center of town—was lost. It was assumed then that the town was gone.

But backfires deliberately set in front of the wild fire helped to control the fire line, in some places just yards from Jamestown houses. Then an icy rain fell that night, effectively putting the fire out. Evacuees were allowed back into town the next morning—gathering at the Jamestown Mercantile to celebrate, and to thank and hug firefighters.

In just the one day, the fire burned 3,500 acres and destroyed 12 homes.

