

Boats, dock catch fire on Lake Jackson

By PHIL ATTINGER
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — Sebring firefighters got a call at 5:28 a.m. Wednesday about a fully-involved fire at the Sebring City Pier.

They arrived at the pier at 5:33 a.m. and didn't see any fire there. They did see fire south of the pier at a residential dock/boat house on the lake.

"They got in the trucks to head to where it was," said Sebring Fire Capt. Austin Maddox, who put

the fire in the mid-1800 block on Lakeview Drive, behind a house that sits across from the First Presbyterian Church parking lot.

Fire crews arrived there at 5:39 a.m. Luckily they had a hydrant near the house, Maddox said. Crews used more than 500 feet of hose to reach a dock and three boats that were burning over the water, behind the house.

Maddox said they ran a 2.5-inch line from the truck to the dock, and then hooked it to a 1.75-inch line at the site.

Once they started extinguishing the fire, Maddox said, Lt. Ryan Feickert called in the department's rescue boat to deploy booms in case of fuel and/or oil leakage.

Fire crews quickly put the fire out. No one was injured, Maddox said, and the site had no signs of fuel or other hazardous materials leaking into the lake.

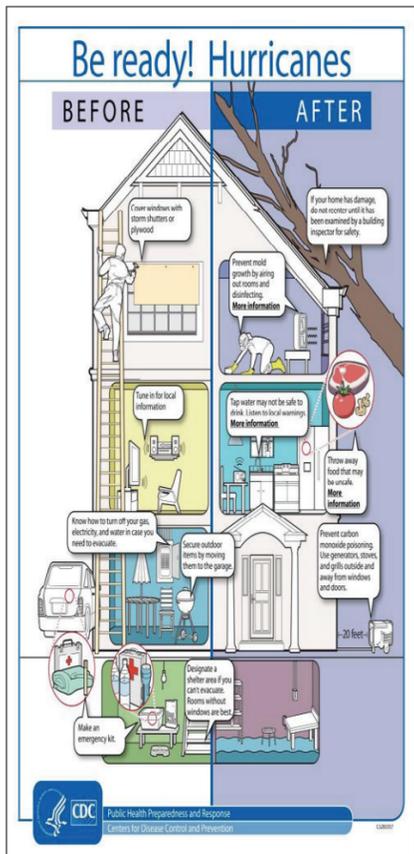
However, the cause of the fire is under investigation by the Florida Division of the State Fire Marshal. The Florida



COURTESY PHOTO/SEBRING PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS LOCAL 3210

Sebring firefighters attack a fully-involved fire on a boat dock on Lake Jackson, in the 1800 block of Lakeview Drive. There were no injuries and the cause is unknown. State fire and environmental officials are investigating the fire.

FIRE | 3A



Hurricane forecast revised

By KIM MOODY
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — Hurricane Elsa was a wake-up call for those unprepared for the inevitable storms. On the heels of Elsa, Colorado State University updated its hurricane forecast for the third time on July 8, and not for the better.

Hurricane season runs from June 1 through Nov. 30.

The university is now forecasting a continued above-average hurricane season with 20 named storms. In comparison, CSU shows an average of 14.4 storms from 1991-2020. The count includes the storms that have already made their appearance in the Atlantic Ocean.

Of the 20 storms, nine are predicted to be hurricanes with four of those becoming major hurricanes.

They added two more named storms from the last update on June 3. The June 3 forecast showed 18 storms, which included Ana, which formed before the season's official start.

The updated forecast by Philip J. Klotzbach, Michael M. Bell and Jhordanne Jones stated they anticipate an "above-normal probability" that major hurricanes could make landfall along the country's coastline.

The report cited sea surface temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean as "near" or "slightly above normal." There is also no El Nino, which helps to subdue tropical development. The update also indicates the formation of Hurricane Elsa typically portends an active season.

Anyone who lived in Highlands County during Hurricane Irma in 2017 knows that it doesn't matter what the forecasts say; it only takes one storm to have life-changing effects. The best defense is a good offense and in hurricane season, that means being prepared.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has a considerable amount of preparedness information, including COVID-19 preparations on its website at weather.gov. Also, ready.gov has printable materials on preparing for a storm for businesses, pets owners and a hurricane kit for families.

Thunder season

Lightning strikes 2 homes

By JOHN GUERRA
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — In a demonstration of how electricity goes wherever it wants, lightning struck a tree on Lake Haven Boulevard, then followed phone and electric lines a short distance to a second home in the 1200 block of Garland Avenue, where it charred an exterior electric box.

According to Highlands County's Public Safety Director Marc S. Bashoor, what at first was a call to Garland Avenue for a house fire, became, upon inspection by firefighters, to be two houses slightly damaged by the same bolt of lightning.

At the home on Lake Haven, lightning split a pine tree, drove down the tree into the ground and blew out a phone exchange box in the back yard. It then traveled to a phone box on the side of the house.

"It blew the phone box off the side of the house on Lake Haven, but the house still had electricity," Bashoor said.

The lightning kept going, riding phone and electric lines to the Garland Avenue house and blew out an electric box on the side of that house.

There were no injuries.

Matt Burnside was watching TV on Garland Street when he heard the lightning hit the house next door.

"It was a big boom!" Burnside said as he stood in his yard watching firefighters examine the charred electric box on the side of his neighbor's house. No one was home at the Garland home.

Bashoor was on scene as firefighters inspected the interior of the Garland Avenue house for damage and smoke.

It's not uncommon to get calls from homeowners who smell smoke after lightning hits.

"It's a pretty regular thing for us to get lightning strikes during the rainy season," Bashoor said. "It will hit everything that attracts it, including homes with people in it. It will seek the tallest thing."

Units from West Sebring Station 10; George Boulevard Station 19; Sun 'N



COURTESY/HIGHLANDS COUNTY FIRE RESCUE

The bolt of lightning hit this phone exchange box before traveling to the side of a nearby house and damaging a phone box on its side.

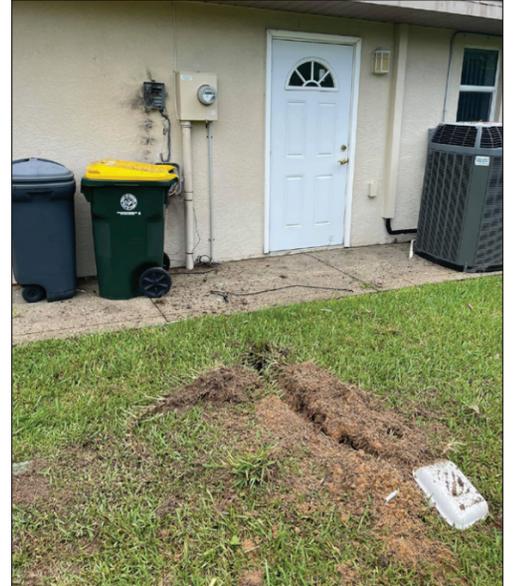


JOHN GUERRA/STAFF

Firefighters try to gain entry to a home on Garland Avenue to look for fire or smoke after lightning struck an exterior electric box.

Lakes Station 7; Medic units 10 and 19, and Battalion 1 responded to the incident.

Duke Energy and Highlands County Sheriff's deputies also were on hand, Bashoor said.



COURTESY/HIGHLANDS COUNTY FIRE RESCUE

It's easy to follow lightning's path at this house on Lake Haven Boulevard Wednesday. The bolt hit a pine tree, traveled across a lawn to a house, then followed electric lines to a house on Garland Avenue nearby.

Education board approves new school standards

By RYAN DAILEY
NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA

TALLAHASSEE — During an at-times heated meeting on Wednesday, the State Board of Education adopted new curriculum standards for civics, government and Holocaust education, along with updates to other subject areas.

The revised civic education standards will, in part, require public school students to "study primary source documents to understand the

philosophical underpinnings of the American Republic and the root cause of American exceptionalism."

In an outline of the standards on its website, the state Department of Education said the guidelines for instruction will prioritize teaching students "a sense of civic pride" and how to "participate regularly in all levels of government."

Gov. Ron DeSantis appeared at the board's Wednesday meeting to tout the updated standards.

"Whatever pathway you choose, you have to be able to discharge the duties of being a citizen. So this civics education is universally applicable, regardless of what field you go into, regardless of what you do in your life once you leave Florida's education system," DeSantis told the board and a sizable crowd gathered at the St. Petersburg College Seminole campus in Pinellas County. DeSantis also threw his support being the new Holocaust education standards.

"We want to make sure our students understand the evils of the Holocaust. You see people throughout the world try to diminish or even reject that the Holocaust even happened," the governor said Wednesday.

The board also approved alternate standards in math and English-language arts for students with "the most significant cognitive disabilities," as well as minor "technical" revisions to

STANDARDS | 3A



Classifieds..... B4-6 Sports B1 Viewpoints..... A6
Comics B7-10 TV Listings A7 Weather..... A8
Lottery A2

Good morning To
Howard Sothard
Thanks for reading!

