



# The Eldorado Success

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## Spectacular Thunderstorms Spark Wildfires Across County

Abundant rains both in the spring and summer mean that area ranchland is covered with vegetation. That's normally a good thing. But, on Sunday, September 18th, thunderstorms swept across Schleicher County and cloud-to-ground lightning sparked several wildfires which feasted on the waist-high grass and broom weed.

Assistant Fire Chief T.J. Rodriguez estimated on Tuesday that the series of fires charred some 1,680 acres of pasture land.

The largest group of the fires was located about 15 miles north-northwest of Eldorado. The majority of the blaze was located on the Case and Sproul ranches.

Other fires were reported northeast of town but firefighters were unable to locate them. It is believed that heavy rains may have doused the flames shortly after they were sparked by lightning.

A fire on the Mertz Ranch about five miles southeast of Eldorado threatened a barn but was quickly controlled. The blaze reignited on Monday afternoon causing firefighters to be called back to the scene.

The big fire however, was the one northwest of Eldorado. Firefighters from Eldorado, Sonora, Ozona, Mertzson and Christoval were joined by units from the Texas Forest Service. The fire crews were challenged by shifting and swirling winds as well as abundant fuel in the pastures. The firefighters stayed with the blaze into the early morning



Multiple lightning strikes crash to the ground as a massive thunderstorm moves south into Schleicher County. This storm, seen here from between Barnhart and Big Lake, was responsible for a large grass fire northwest of Eldorado that kept fire crews from Eldorado, Sonora, Ozona, Christoval and Mertzson out most of Sunday night and early Monday morning. Units from the Texas Forest Service were also called in to assist.

J.L. MANKIN | THE BIG LAKE WILDCAT

hours on Monday.

By midmorning on Monday, Jimmy Doyle took his airplane up to survey the damage and a few of the local firefighters were called back out to extinguish some hot spots.

J.L. Mankin, editor of The Big Lake Wildcat newspaper

managed to photograph the storm that sparked Sunday night's big blaze northwest of Eldorado. His photo (above) was taken from the west and shows starry skies above the storm, lots of cloud-to-ground lightning, and the moon rising in the east beneath the mammoth cloud.

Firefighters were called out again on Monday as hot spots broke out on the Mertz Ranch southeast of town and the Wilson Ranch north of town.

The storms that triggered the fires brought heavy rains to parts of the north end of the county, but little rain fell south of

Eldorado.

With the hot and dry conditions continuing this week, and plenty of fuel remaining in the pastures, Rodriguez reminds everyone that the county-wide burn ban remains in effect and he asks everyone to be vigilant.