

Fire: \$250K released in emergency funds

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Gov. Felix Camacho yesterday issued an executive order to help pay for the extinguishing of an underground fire that's been smoldering in Yigo since Tuesday.

According to Lesley Leon Guerrero, spokeswoman for Guam Homeland Security's Office of Civil Defense, her agency received the emergency declaration yesterday afternoon. The order releases \$250,000 in emergency funds, she said.

Residents may require temporary shelter or fire officials may need heavy equipment to put out the fire.

The fire, which started off Route 15 near Mount Santa Rosa on Tuesday, originates from a pit about 50 feet deep and 200 to 300 feet wide. Guam Environmental Protection Agency spokesman Gerry Cruz confirmed the property owner was previously issued a notice of violation by Guam EPA for allegedly dumping debris into the pit illegally. Neither Guam EPA nor the Office of the Attorney General have released the status of that notice.



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Yesterday, Yigo Mayor Robert Lizama said the smoke from the fire wasn't as heavy as it was days before, and that it was just "smoldering" beneath the ground.

"For now, the fire has subsided," he said.

Lizama met with members of several agencies on Thursday to discuss how to extinguish the fire, because the fire department has been ordered not to enter the pit's depths,

due to the instability of the area.

The smoke currently clouding the pit's entrance allows only about 1 foot of visibility, Guam Fire Department Chief Dave Peredo said on Thursday.

During the meeting, Peredo and Cruz said they were hesitant to allow the area to be flooded with water, because it sits atop the northern lens aquifer. They said dousing the pit with water would cause contaminants to seep into the aquifer, a major source of the island's drinking water.

An alternative would be to cap

the pit with clay dirt and soil, according to Cruz.

For now, authorities are letting the fire burn, as it is only emitting small amounts of carbon monoxide, according to Maj. Mike Tougher, Guam National Guard 94th Civil Service Team commander.

His team tested for toxic materials in that area on Wednesday and said none were present—besides the small amounts of carbon monoxide from the smoke.

But the gas could pose a health hazard over the course of several days, he said.