

Preventative measures taken to protect Lake McDonald Lodge from the Sprague Fire

By Maren Siu
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GLACIER NATIONAL PARK - Only a mile away from Lake McDonald Lodge the Sprague fire continues to burn over 13,000 acres. With the fire being so close to the lodge structural protection specialists have been hired to take preventative measures for the building.



Structural protection specialist Kevin Smith tells us one way of prevention is using structural wraps. The wrap comes with an aluminum side and a cloth side. The shiny aluminum is there to reflect heat from potential nearby flames away from the building. The other thing wrapping does is prevent embers from jumping into the vents.

Smith says, "The bigger part that you're seeing up here, these are actually wrapping open air vents that go into the roof system. We're trying to prevent embers if the fire is nearby and it's putting up smoke, we're trying to prevent embers that could to get into the structure."

Large water containers affectionately called "pumpkins" hold almost 2,000 gallons of water are also used onsite for a backup water supply. All of the water used in prevention methods is pumped directly from Lake McDonald. This water plays a crucial role in structural protection.

Smith tells us water is sprayed directly onto the structure's roof, not the sides. Soaking the roof would prevent potential flames from spreading throughout the structure. However, Smith tells us this technique comes with its challenges.

Smith explains, "You don't want to do water damage. So, we can't continue to spray the buildings directly so it's kind of a balance between applying water and making sure we're preserving the structure."

Smith tells us crews apply water to the building in short 20 minute shifts to prevent further water damage.

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It would be huge "challenge" also to re-build the lodge should it catch fire an burn like Sperry. Better to have water damage than charcoal remains.

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