



Falls Fire Update for July 16, 2024

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(541) 208-4370 Staffed 8 am to 8 pm

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The Falls Fire experienced significant growth again yesterday due to hot and dry conditions and strong outflow winds from passing thunderstorms. The fire is now estimated at 85,348 acres with 0% containment. The fire is burning approximately 13.5 miles north of Burns, 15 miles southeast of Seneca, and 3 miles west of Highway (Hwy) 395. Highway 395 remains closed from milepost 60 north to Seneca.

A community meeting is planned for 6:30 p.m. at Seneca City Hall tonight, July 16. Fire managers intend to host the meeting in person and stream it live on the Malheur National Forest and Falls Fire 2024 Facebook pages. If fire activity or fire-related road closures makes it unsafe or unpractical for fire managers to travel from Burns to Seneca, the meeting will only be live streamed on Facebook. The meeting will include time for questions.

Yesterday afternoon the fire grew significantly in the northeast corner. Initially, the fire grew northerly toward Forest Service Road (FSR) 31 and it then shifted southeasterly toward the FSR 3110 pushed by strong, shifting winds. The fire also challenged anchor points in the northwest corner and southeast corners of the fire. Firefighters, on both day and night shifts, lined spot fires and continued to hold the northwestern and southern perimeters of the fire along the FSR 43. Firefighters held the fire to minimal growth on the southeastern corner near Lake Creek and worked to establish dozer control lines to tie into the Silvies River area to the east toward the FSR 3110 area. One OSFM Structure Task Forces worked on the fire throughout the night to triage and provide structure protection. Firefighters continued to scout for opportunities to establish additional control lines.

Aerial resources, including three helicopters, two cranes, six single-engine air tankers (SEATs), two large air tankers (LATs), and two very large air tankers (VLATs) helped to slow the fires growth, and supported firefighters as they made progress securing containment lines.

Today, the fire is predicted to be very active with elevated rates of spread. Firefighters will work to construct additional control lines and to hold the fire along established control lines using both aerial and ground resources. Firefighters will continue to scout for future control lines to the north and east.

The Oregon State Fire Marshal (OSFM) Blue Incident Management Team and seven task forces have been assigned to the fire. The task forces are structural firefighters from Oregon and Washington. They include Washington County, Lincoln County, Douglas County, Tillamook County, Yamhill County, Clackamas County, Snohomish County, and Thurston County. Their primary focus will be structure protection, structure assessment, and supporting the overall mission of the Falls Fire. Fire activity in the area remains extreme

and certain areas may not be safe for assessment. As weather and fire behavior allow, OSFM Task Forces will assess cabins, ranches, and structures in and around the fire. Crews are documenting damage or lost structures using GPS software. They will be working on Lone Pine Road, Hines Logging Road, east of Highway 395, and west of Hwy 395 toward Silvies Ranch.

The incident command team continues to increase the number of resources working on the fire and to build greater capacity for fire suppression efforts. Currently there are 891 personnel on the fire; this includes 19 20-person hand crews, 41 fire engines, 13 bulldozers, and 14 water tenders.

Today's predicted weather calls for dry and very unstable conditions with temperatures near 90 degrees and humidity around 15%. Winds will generally be from the west-southwest at 5-8 mph. There is a chance of thunderstorms with gusty winds up to 30 mph.

Evacuation notices remain in effect in Grant and Harney Counties. For the most accurate evacuation information, please visit the Harney County Sheriff's evacuation map here: <https://tinyurl.com/3zst4sjy>, or the Grant County Emergency Management Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100068819321423>.

The Malheur National Forest issued an updated fire area closure Sunday, July 14. A detailed map and additional information about the fire area closure are available at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/malheur/news-events/?cid=FSEPRD1188914>. A temporary flight restriction (TFR) remains in place over the fire area.

Fire Restrictions are in effect across Oregon; Know Before You Go, and use extreme caution while recreating in these hot and dry conditions. #OnlyYouCanPreventWildfires