



Falls and Telephone Fires Update for July 23, 2024

Falls Fire Quick Facts:

Size: 139,507

Start Date: July 10, 2024

Location: 13 Miles NW of Burns, Oregon

Containment: 40%

Total Personnel: 1,663

Cause: Human-caused, under investigation

Structures Triaged: Residences: 300; Commercial: 72*; Outbuildings: 484

Resources Assigned: 49 hand crews, 100 engines, 100 bulldozers, 30 water tenders

Aerial resources available to the fire: two helicopters, and single-engine air tankers (SEATS)

Telephone Fire: The Telephone Fire started yesterday afternoon south of King Mountain on the Emigrant Creek Ranger District on the Malheur National Forest. The fire grew quickly to 5,000 acres fanned by erratic winds. The fire perimeter is approximately located five miles east of Highway (Hwy) 395 and fourteen miles north of Hwy 20. Strong winds pushed the fire south last night prompting Level 3 evacuations for areas east of Hwy 395 to Buck Butte and south to Hwy 20 in Harney County.

Northwest Team 8 and Oregon State Fire Marshal (OSFM) Blue Team assumed command of the new incident Monday night. A number of resources working on the Falls Fire were sent to the fire to do initial attack. Wildland operations used air and ground resources to attack the fire. Fire conditions produced plume-dominated fire behavior that required the need to disengage. Night shift focused on establishing areas to protect structures. Structural crews have already surveyed and completed surface preparation at several residences north of the new start earlier this week as part of a contingency plan for the Falls Fire. As winds shifted in the evening, OSFM engines were repositioned to provide protection to the structures on the southern edge of the fire. OSFM crews will continue to patrol north of Hwy 23 on the southern edge of the Telephone Fire. These crews will be scouting the new area to assess and establish protection plans for the properties directly adjacent to the new fire.

A community meeting for the Falls and Telephone Fires will be held at the Burns Chamber of Commerce tonight, July 23, at 6:30 PM. The meeting will also be live streamed on the Malheur National Forest and Falls Fire 2024 Facebook pages.

Falls Fire: Yesterday, the fire became very active in the afternoon as southwest winds prompted growth along portions of the northern perimeter. The fire remains approximately 13 miles north of Burns, 11 miles southwest of Seneca, 7.5 miles south of Izee, and 2.5 miles west of Highway (Hwy) 395. OSFM task forces protected properties near FSR 47, in the Red Hill area, and along Hwy 395. Efforts to protect private property near FSR 47 were successful despite challenging weather conditions on Sunday. Additionally, preparation work previously completed in the Red Hill area allowed for several OSFM task forces to be quickly reallocated to the Telephone Fire during initial attack. Overall, established control line held despite the weather challenges the lines held firm.

In the northwest corner of the fire, firefighters worked to hold and secure line below the western slopes of Burnt Mountain along FSR 4785 near Coral Creek south then east to FSR 47 near the junction with FSR 3150. Near this junction, the fire grew to FSR 3150 and then began to move northerly and easterly. Construction of secondary contingency (backup) dozer line has been completed to the northwest near Snow Mountain along FSR 4781. Construction of additional secondary dozer line going both north and south off FSR 4781 in the Snow Mountain continued. Firefighters scouted for additional opportunities to locate secondary contingency line to connect to a series of roads near FSR 37 and FSR 31 into a continuous secondary control line running east-west north of the fire. In the northeast corner of the fire, along FSR 31 south of Myrtle Park Meadows, crews continued work on a challenging 200 acre slop-over with the goal of

tying it back into FSR 31. Control lines along much of the southern portions of FSR 31 and west to FSR 43 continued to hold firm, despite gusty winds, as mop-up operations are ongoing.

Today, OSFM Task Forces will remain active along the northeast, east and southern edges of the fire. Engines will be strategically placed near values at risk to monitor the fire's proximity. In the northwest corner, crews will be holding and mopping-up established control lines, and will look for opportunities to construct direct control lines to tie in slop-overs back into FSR 3750. Construction of secondary contingency dozer lines will continue along roads going north and south off of FSR 4781 from Snow Mountain. Near FSR 3750 and FSR 47, structure and wildland firefighters will continue to mop-up sources of heat along control lines. Firefighters will continue scouting for additional contingency dozer lines on the FSR 3150 and FSR 3160 to connect into the FSR 37 and FSR 31 road systems to establish a continuous secondary control line running east-west north of the fire. OSFM crews will support burnout operations and continue hardening surface prep at cabins and homes off FSR 37. Efforts to control hotspots in the Red Hill are progressing well and operations there are transitioning into a patrol and mop-up stage. Structures in this area are being hardened by OSFM crews ahead of an anticipated wind shift mid-week that will test control measures along the southern edge.

Further north, away from the fire perimeter, construction will continue on a planned secondary contingency line along FSR 37 just west of Hwy 395 in the Fisk Gulch area. This secondary contingency line is part of an alternate plan and will run east to west using portions of FSR 37 and FSR 31.

As the fire season continues, resources begin to reach their maximum deployment times which are established to ensure crew safety. As a result, the OSFM Task Force from Lincoln County will be demobilizing today.

Weather: Fire weather for today will be very active with dry and unstable conditions. There is a 30% chance of thunderstorms in the afternoon and late evening that could bring gusty outflow winds. Winds will generally be coming from the west-southwest winds 6-8 mph, gusts up to 17 mph. Temperature highs possibly into the upper 90s.

Evacuations: Evacuations were issued last night due to the Telephone Fire. Evacuation notices remain in effect due to the Falls Fire 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>.

Closures: Due to active wildfires compounded by extremely unfavorable weather conditions, limited firefighting resources and County Resources, Malheur National Forest officials are temporarily closing lands within the Malheur National Forest. This closure means that the public is prohibited from entering lands, roads, trails and recreation areas, and facilities on the Malheur National Forest. A detailed map and description of the closure area is available on the Forest website and at any Forest office. Closure signs will be posted on the ground.

Investigation: U.S. Forest Service fire investigators are seeking the public's assistance with any tips or information pertinent to the start of the Falls Fire on the Malheur National Forest. Please submit any information that could assist fire investigation efforts to SM.FS.R6TipHotLine@usda.gov.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/p/Falls-Fire-2024-61562126623985/>

Falls Fire InciWeb: <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/ormaf-falls-fire>

Telephone Fire InciWeb: <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/ormaf-telephone-fire>

Fire Information Line: 541-208-4370, staffed 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Email: 2024.Falls@firenet.gov

Harney County non-emergency evacuation questions: 541-589-5579

Air quality questions: 541-573-2271

Smoke Outlooks: <https://outlooks.airfire.org/outlook>

* Several reclassifications of structures account for the reduction in numbers of commercial properties surveyed.