



Falls and Telephone Fires Update for July 25, 2024

Falls Fire Quick Facts:

Size: 140,422 **Start Date:** July 10, 2024 **Location:** 13 Miles NW of Burns, OR
Containment: 50% **Total Personnel:** 1,628 **Cause:** Human-caused, under investigation
Structures Triaged: Residences: 347; Commercial: 104; Outbuildings: 605
Resources Assigned: 49 hand crews, 93 engines, 23 bulldozers, 31 water tenders
Aerial resources available to the fire: two helicopters, and single-engine air tankers (SEATS)

Telephone Fire Quick Facts:

Size: 9,000 **Start Date:** July 22, 2024 **Location:** 12 miles NE of Burns, OR
Containment: 0% **Total Personnel:** Staffed by Falls Fire personnel **Cause:** Lightning/Natural

Despite high, multi-directional, outflow winds from thunderstorms, control lines on Falls and Telephone fire held firm yesterday. Oregon State Fire Marshall (OSFM) Task Forces and wildland firefighters responded to multiple new starts likely resulting from lightning strikes in the early afternoon. Oregon State Fire Marshal crews were in position to protect structures on both the east and west sides of the highway – including those to the North of the Telephone Fire. Additional crews staffed the structures along the southern edge of the Telephone Fire.

The coordinated efforts of structural and wildland resources have resulted in reducing the risk to structures, thanks to extensive prep work, the reinforcement of control lines and widespread mop up efforts. OSFM will begin to draw down resources accordingly, returning them to their home agencies and increasing availability for other Oregon fires. As a result, three OSFM task forces will be demobilized today. These crews are from Douglas, Tillamook, Clackamas, and Washington Counties. Five OSFM structure groups will remain on the fire, a combination of California and Washington Task Forces. Local resources also remain available to provide structural response should the need arise.

Northwest Incident Management Team will transition to Alaska Team 1 assuming command of both fires at 6:00 AM tomorrow.

Falls Fire: Yesterday, OSFM and wildland crews protected numerous structures along County Road 63, as well as the ranches near Blackhorse Butte and Greenspring Draw. Fortunately, surface prep had previously been completed on these structures by OSFM crews as part of a contingency plan for the Falls Fire. Containment lines held along southern portions of the fire perimeter and as well as much of the eastern and western flanks of the fire. The fire remained active in the northern perimeter of the fire as crews continued to complete construction of both direct and indirect control line.

Today, crews in the northwest corner of the fire will also continue to hold and mop-up below the western slopes of Burnt Mountain along FSR 4785 near Coral Creek south and east to FSR 47 near the junction with FSR 3150. Crews will work to connect fireline back into FSR 3150 in the northeast corner of the fire. Work will also continue further east on FSR 3150, preparing it to use as a control line, and for conducting tactical burnouts.

The northeast corner of the fire remains active. Firefighters will continue to hold and mop up areas adjacent to the FSR 31 south of Myrtle Park Meadows, and work on tying the fire back into the FSR 31. Structural and wildland crews are coordinating to protect structures and mitigate risk to the Gold Hill and Silvies Valley areas.

Patrol and mop-up operations will continue along the south half of the fire perimeter – the area spanning from the southwest perimeter of the fire to near the upper northwest perimeter. 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.

Telephone Fire: Yesterday, crews continued to construct and hold control lines around the fire, having good success despite the challenges of thunderstorms and high winds. Control lines have been established on the west flank, along FSR 2820, to the

north, along FSR 480, and east along FSR 28. Firefighters caught a number of spots north of FSR 480. Firefighters also scouted for areas to construct control lines to the south.

Today, crews will continue to secure and hold established control lines along the northern, southern, and eastern perimeters, and work to establish control line on the southern end of the fire. Crews will also continue to mop-up spots north of FSR 480. Aerial resources will be available to help with suppression operations. Structural crews will be completing reassessments on previously prepped structures along the fire's southern edge.

New Fire Activity: At least eight new fire starts have been located within the area that the Incident Management Team has been delegated authority to conduct initial attack and take suppression actions. Crews responded quickly and most of the new starts have been kept small. Wildland and OSFM resources will be working to protect values at risk and establish control lines around all of the new starts.

The largest of the new fires is the Whiskey Mountain Fire, which is located 2 ½ miles southwest of Whiskey Mountain and is approximately 1,300 acres. The Sand Fire is approximately 540 acres and located on the north side of the Falls Fire near Sand Mountain. Structural resources will complete full prep in the area impacted by the new fire starts north of Falls Fire. This includes areas from Officer's Cabin, working east towards Lewis Creek Ranch and spanning along the northern edge of the fire to Highway 395, as well as down into Silvies Valley where the Falls Fire remains active. Resources will also be completing full prep on buildings along the 63 road, ensuring structural protection in the Sand Mountain area.

Southeast of the Telephone Fire OSFM brought night shift resources to the line early to assist local resources with initial attack on a new start off Cow Creek. Fortunately, resources were quickly able to get this fire under control and the threat to structures in the immediate area has been mitigated.

Weather: Cooler today with temperatures in the 80s. Skies will generally be clear. Diurnally-driven northwesterly winds will become westerly and breezier in the afternoon before returning to northeasterly. There is a 5 percent chance of thunder storms.

Evacuations: Evacuations remain in place in both Grant and Harney Counties due to the Falls and Telephone Fires. 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 have temporarily closed lands within the Malheur National Forest.

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>