



## Falls and Telephone Fires Update for July 29, 2024

### Telephone Fire Quick Facts:

**Size:** 27,000      **Start Date:** July 22, 2024      **Location:** 12 miles NE of Burns, OR  
**Containment:** 0%.    **Total Personnel:** 364 personnel      **Cause:** Lightning/Natural  
**Resources Assigned:** 12 hand crews, 11 engines, 5 bulldozers, 11 water tenders, 1 skidder

### Falls Fire Quick Facts:

**Size:** 142,307      **Start Date:** July 10, 2024      **Location:** 13 Miles NW of Burns, OR  
**Containment:** 69%    **Total Personnel:** 769    **Cause:** Human-caused, under investigation  
**Structures Triaged:** Residences: 386; Commercial: 119 Outbuildings: 760  
**Resources Assigned:** 45 hand crews, 47 engines, 21 bulldozers, 27 water tenders, 6 masticators, 7 skidders

### Sand Mountain Fire Quick Facts:

**Size:** 4,204      **Start Date:** July 25, 2024      **Location:** 17 miles SW of Seneca, OR  
**Containment:** 0%    **Total Personnel:** Staffed by Falls Fire personnel    **Cause:** Undetermined

### Ritter Fire Quick Facts:

**Size:** 459      **Start Date:** July 23, 2024      **Location:** Stinking Water Mountain NE of Crane, OR  
**Containment:** 52%.    **Total Personnel:** 41 personnel      **Cause:** Lightning/Natural  
**Resources Assigned:** 3 hand crews, 10 engines, 1 bulldozer, 2 water tenders, 1 skidder

**Aerial resources available:** 2 Type 1 Helicopters assigned – available to all fires in the area. 4 Single Engine Airtankers (SEATs) available for initial attack. SEATs can deliver up to 800 gallons of fire retardant to support firefighters on the ground. These small airplanes can reload and operate in areas where larger airtankers cannot.

### New Fire Activity Quick Facts:

Whiskey Mountain: 3,402 acres; Cow Creek: 85 acres; Parasol: 485 acres; Poison: 182 acres.  
**Total Personnel:** Staffed by Falls Fire personnel.

\*Acreage on some fires may not be accurate, as infrared imagery was unavailable on July 29.

### Community Meetings Scheduled:

#### Monday, July 29 at 7 pm, at the Harney County Chamber of Commerce in Burns

This meeting will be live streamed on the Malheur National Forest Facebook page and shared on the Falls and Telephone Fires 2024 Facebook page This meeting will share updates on the Falls, Telephone, and other fires in the area.

### Priorities for Monday, July 29:

**Monday is expected to be an active fire day, with growth in uncontained areas, and potential spotting distances up to 1/3 of a mile.**

- 1) Initial Attack: The potential for new fire starts in the area remains significant at this time, and firefighters remain vigilant and focused on initial attack (IA) and are ready to respond to any new threats.
- 2) Telephone Fire: Crews will continue to work on connecting to the footprint of the Upper Pine Fire. On the east side of the fire, hotshots and heavy equipment will be positioned and ready to receive fire. Crews will work on structure protection in the Poujade Field area.

- 3) Poison Fire: Priorities are to conduct firing operations north of the 17 road inside recently established line, as well as holding existing line.
- 4) On the northeast corner of the Falls Fire in the Gold Hill area direct suppression and prepping will continue.
- 5) Crews will continue creating dozer lines to hold the 3160 road on the south side of the Sand Fire.

## **Fire Summaries:**

**Telephone Fire:** The Telephone Fire remains a top priority area, with continued challenging conditions and robust staffing. The east side of the fire was very active on Sunday, pushing to the northeast and crossing containment lines. It crossed to the east of road 2855, southwest of Thompson Mountain, resulting in expanded evacuations. The south end is in good shape, and the fire has reached existing dozer lines. On the north and west sides of the fire, the 28/20 road system has been prepped and is holding; the plan is to burn and contain that area, use spot firing as necessary, and dozer line to anchor the fire. On Monday, crews will work on reinforcing line along Pine Creek Road, and hotshots and heavy equipment will be on the east side of 28 road, ready to receive fire. Structure protection will be done in the Poujade Field area, with scouting to the north and northeast side of the fire. Crews working the Telephone Fire will be fortified by additional crews arriving from other area fires such as the Falls and Ritter Fires. For several days, crews have been re-allocated to the Telephone Fire from other area fires at such a fast pace that the crew-tracking database has not kept up. Ten crews, and a total of 364 personnel are currently working this fire, a correction from yesterday's reported number.

**Falls Fire:** On Sunday, crews continued mop up and patrol on the south side of the fire. On the west side, near Whiskey Mountain, indirect line was extended along the 4375 road to wrap around the Whiskey Mountain Fire down to the 43 road. Burnout operations were conducted overnight. Crews identified and managed a few small fire spots. The north side of the fire remained in good shape up to Chapel Gulch/63 road with burnout into several areas of prior fuel treatment. The main area of concern was a slopover on the 31 road in the Myrtle Creek area, which crews worked to contain. Slopover is a fire edge that crosses a control line or natural barrier intended to confine the fire. Monday, crews are working on placing a hose lay completely around the slopover and are also aiming to complete work on locking in Whiskey Mountain. Crews who have been working on areas of the Falls Fire which are now secure will be re-allocated to areas experiencing higher fire behavior and activity, such as the Telephone, Parasol, and Poison Fires.

**Sand Mountain Fire:** The Sand Mountain Fire to the north of Falls was holding well along the 3160 road; crews have anchored off the road and used dozers and the existing small road system to stitch together direct line. Crews had success east of the 3160 road, along the 655 road, working toward Grasshopper Road. On a small area where the Sand Fire didn't join up with the Falls Fire, crews constructed dozer line over Gilbert Ridge and completed hose lays. Today, the plan is to continue working on securing that section so there will be a solid anchor with the fire contained all along the west side. Sunday, crews continued to work on bringing the Sand Fire into the Falls Fire footprint. On the northern edge of Falls, crews took advantage of favorable winds at the Sand Fire and conducted firing operations to secure fireline. On the west side of the fire, dozers are being used and firefighters are going as direct as possible. Crews are also using existing road systems to develop containment lines.

**Parasol and Poison Fires:** The Parasol is now completely surrounded with either handline, dozer line, or road, and crews are working on containment 5-10 ft inside the line. No new spot fires were reported on Sunday. On the Poison Fire, north of the 17 road, crews established indirect line using adjacent roads and dozer line on the west side and will plan firing operations on Monday.

**Ritter Fire:** Crews had a big win on the Ritter Fire with extremely effective initial attack by local crews, and line completed around 100% of the fire. If the hotshot crews working this fire had not caught the fire when they did, it had the potential of expanding into a 20,000 to 30,000 acre fire. Going forward, crews will continue to work to secure line and mop up. Mop up involves extinguishing or removing burning material near control lines, felling snags,

and trenching logs to prevent rolling after an area has burned, to make a fire safe. As with the Falls Fire, some crews from the Ritter Fire were re-allocated to higher fire activity areas such as the Telephone Fire.

In all of the fire areas, smoke will continue to be prevalent as additional smoke blows in from fires in Canada, California, and the Cascade mountains. This is not expected to change significantly in the near future. See information at the bottom of this release for smoke outlooks and air quality questions.

**Weather:** There will be a change in weather, with a dry cold front approaching from the northwest, bringing southwesterly winds. Wind gusts of up to 15-20 mph are possible later this afternoon. The evening brings a change of thunderstorms with little moisture, and possible dry lightning. Tuesday's weather will be more unstable, but more moist, with a small chance of thunderstorms in the afternoon.

**Evacuations:** Due to the continued growth east of the Telephone Fire, evacuations have expanded. 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](mailto:SM.FS.R6TipHotLine@usda.gov).

**Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR):** TFRs in the area have been changing; pilots should check the latest information on the Federal Aviation Administration TFR website prior to flying: [https://tfr.faa.gov/tfr\\_map\\_ims/html/index.html](https://tfr.faa.gov/tfr_map_ims/html/index.html)

**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](mailto: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>