



## Falls and Telephone Fires Update for July 30, 2024

### Telephone Fire Quick Facts:

**Size:** 31,721      **Start Date:** July 22, 2024      **Location:** 12 miles NE of Burns, OR  
**Containment:** 15%.    **Total Personnel:** 364 personnel      **Cause:** Lightning/Natural  
**Resources Assigned:** 12 hand crews, 14 engines, 5 bulldozers, 7 water tenders, 1 skidder  
*\*Resource numbers are changing rapidly as crews are re-allocated to this Fire.*

### 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:** 34 hand crews, 44 engines, 21 bulldozers, 24 water tenders, 6 masticators, 8 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:** 1 hand crew, 5 engines, 1 water tender, 1 skidder

**Aerial resources available:** 2 Type 1 Helicopters assigned and 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: 86 acres; Parasol: 485 acres; Poison: 593 acres.  
**Total Personnel:** Staffed by Falls Fire personnel.

### Community Meetings Scheduled:

**Tuesday, July 30 at 3 pm, at the Drewsey School Gymnasium, 78882 Drewsey Rd, Drewsey, OR**

Leaders of the Alaska Incident Management Team will be in Drewsey for a community meeting to provide an update on the Telephone Fire, Falls Fire and several other fires we are working to suppress in the area. The meeting will also be shared on the Malheur National Forest Facebook page, as well as the Falls and Telephone Fires Facebook page.

### Priorities for Tuesday, July 30:

- 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: Firefighters will work in the vicinity of the 243 road, and in the Rattlesnake area. In the northeast portion of the fire, crews will work on dozer line, and along will local partners.
- 3) Perisol and Poison Fires: Perisol will continue to hold and mop up. On Poison, continuing firing operations to hold the fire where it is along the west and south sides of the fire.
- 4) Continue direct suppression and prepping on the northeast corner of the Falls Fire in the Gold Hill area.
- 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 continues to be a top priority. Monday afternoon, the Telephone Fire was the most active on the northeast side and moved about 1.5 to 2 miles out to Elephant Butte. Firefighters took actions along the eastern edge of the fire on Monday where safe to do so, but fuels were extremely dry and volatile. Overnight, crews worked in the Rattlesnake area, which is now looking good. Crews worked to hold the line on the east and south sides of the fire where there is dozer line near Robertson Draw and Davis Gulch. Line on the western side of the 28 road is holding and was reinforced. In Poujade Field, crews were successful in conducting small scale burnout around dozer line to protect structures. Burning operations were done to tie 28 to the Upper Pine footprint, and the west side of the 28 has held.

Additional ground and air resources were deployed to the area on Monday. The day started with more than 270 personnel working the Telephone Fire, many of them local and regional, including Burns BLM District firefighting engines. Also, local members of the Rangeland Fire Protection Association (RFPA) have joined the effort, working with our Operations leadership to provide more people, local knowledge, and equipment to the firefighting effort. We are working closely with local partners and resources to develop strategies on the ground for managing the eastern progression of the Telephone Fire.

Crews, dozers, and engines are positioned in the Rattlesnake area to continue work. On Tuesday crews will work to address any spots that may occur on the north and west sides of the fire and will continue to look for opportunities on the east side to hold the fire. Work is also being done on the southeast side of the fire to connect the 28 road to dozer line and will look for opportunities to conduct firing operations. On the east side of the fire, resources are engaged in structure protection. They plan to engage the fire directly if safe to do so, or secure indirect line in order to protect values along Pine Creek Road.

Firefighters may engage a fire **directly** (using treatment applied directly to burning fuel such as wetting, smothering, or chemically quenching the fire or by physically separating the burning fuel from unburned fuel). In other cases, when it is unsafe to fight fire directly at its edge due to factors such as fast-spreading or high-intensity fire, firefighters may use indirect attack. **Indirect** attack is a method of suppression in which the control line is located some distance away from the fire's active edge, using natural or constructed firebreaks or fuel breaks and favorable breaks in the topography. The intervening fuel is usually backfired; but occasionally the main fire is allowed to burn to the line, depending on conditions.

## Falls Fire:

On Monday the nearby Whiskey Mountain Fire was active, and crews continued firing operations to try to tie it back into the Falls Fire. The Falls Fire was bumping against the 655/684 junction. Crews patrolled the northwest side of the fire, improved dozer line along the 3170 road, and created fuel breaks in the area. Dozer line was completed to hold the fire along the 3160 road on the south side of the Sand Mountain Fire. Crews have dealt with frequent spot fires in the northeast corner of the fire in the Gold Hill area and have engaged the fire directly with success. On the Whiskey Mountain Fire, crews have had good success in keeping the fire footprint small and have been able to do firing operations to hold line. Monitoring continues around Gilbert Ridge to keep the fire in check. The line closest to Izee has held, with no fire movement in the last couple of days. Tuesday, crews will patrol the southern portion of the Falls Fire, work on holding line created yesterday in the Whiskey Mountain area (along with patrol and mop up in this area), and work on a fuel break along the 31 road.

## Sand Mountain Fire:

On Monday a spot fire occurred on the southeast corner of the fire, within the planned perimeter; crews were added to this spot. Crews will work Tuesday on holding line around Smokey Creek on the northwest side of the fire. Crews will work to tie the fire into the 31 road.

**Parasol and Poison Fires:** The Parasol is now completely surrounded with either handline, dozer line, or road, and crews are working to reinforce the containment 5-10 ft inside the line. Infrared imagery collected Monday did not show any growth on the Parasol Fire.

The Poison Fire was most active on Monday in the northeast corner. Fire activity was moderate along the south and southeast sides where crews were conducting burning operations along the 17 road. Crews continued firing operations to hold the fire where it is along the west and south sides of the fire; they will continue this work on Tuesday.

**Ritter Fire:** Line is completed around 100% of the fire; crews continue to grid, mop up, and hold line. We will see additional containment objectives today.

**Weather:** Monday's cold front brought some showers to portions of the fire areas, along with solid humidity recovery, and helped to push smoke away. Further cooling is expected today behind the cold front, and any lingering showers around the region will quickly diminish. Moderate northwesterly winds will prevail with afternoon gusts of up to 20 mph. A high pressure will begin to build over the region midweek bringing higher temperatures.

**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>