



Falls and Telephone Fires Update for Aug 2, 2024

Telephone Fire Quick Facts:

Size: 46,000 **Start Date:** July 22, 2024 **Location:** 12 miles NE of Burns, OR
Containment: 23%. **Total Personnel:** 353 personnel **Cause:** Lightning/Natural
Resources Assigned: 11 hand crews, 20 engines, 6 bulldozers, 7 water tenders, 4 skidders

Falls Fire Quick Facts:

Size: 143,236 **Start Date:** July 10, 2024 **Location:** 13 Miles NW of Burns, OR
Containment: 73% **Total Personnel:** 542 **Cause:** Human-caused, under investigation
Structures Triaged: Residences: 386; Commercial: 119 Outbuildings: 760
Resources Assigned: 29 hand crews, 44 engines, 14 bulldozers, 24 water tenders, 7 masticators, 8 skidders

Sand Mountain Fire Quick Facts:

Size: 4,974 **Start Date:** July 25, 2024 **Location:** 17 miles SW of Seneca, OR
Containment: 0% **Total Personnel:** Staffed by Falls Fire personnel **Cause:** Lightning/Natural

Ritter Fire Quick Facts:

Size: 459 **Start Date:** July 23, 2024 **Location:** Stinking Water Mountain NE of Crane, OR
Containment: 100%. **Total Personnel:** 6 personnel **Cause:** Lightning/Natural

Other Fires Quick Facts:

Whiskey Mountain: 4,345 acres; Cow Creek: 86 acres; Parasol: 485 acres; Poison: 1,011 acres.
Total Personnel: Staffed by Falls Fire personnel.

The National Weather Service has issued a **Red Flag Warning** (in effect through 8/3 at 11:00pm) and [Excessive Heat Warning](#) (in effect through 8/2 at 11:00 pm) for the fire area.

Aerial resources assigned: 2 Type 1 helicopters and One Type 1 Uncrewed Aircraft System (UAS) assigned and available to all fires in the area. Air support also includes a lend/leasing system and additional aircraft will be pulled from different areas of the region to our fires today.

Crews are working 24/7 towards reaching priorities on area fires. Day shift, swing shift, and night shift crews' work is highly coordinated to benefit suppression efforts. Shifts intentionally overlap during the critical burn period, and night shift firefighters work in the highest priority areas and places with imminent effects and concerns.

Community Meetings Scheduled:

Friday, August 2 at 3 pm, at Seneca City Hall, 106 Avenue A, Seneca OR

Leaders of the Alaska Incident Management Team will be in Seneca 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 Friday, August 2:

***Weather and fuel conditions are in alignment for extreme fire behavior today.**

- 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) Identify direct and indirect control line options on the northwest portion of the Falls and Sand fires to stop westward fire progression and hold existing direct firelines.
- 3) Work to gain containment around yesterday's slopover on the southwest side of the Telephone Fire
- 4) Continue work towards tying into the Pine Creek drainage on the Telephone Fire
- 5) Continue to secure line on the Poison Fire, conduct mop up in areas of recent small-scale firing operations

Fire Summaries:

Hotter and drier weather occurring over the next several days could lead to increased fire behavior and will test existing firelines. Fire plumes could be visible over parts of the fire areas today.

Telephone Fire: The northwest and northeast sides of the Telephone Fire were very active on Thursday and increased in size by approximately 7,000 acres. Most growth was interior in the northeast corner. In mid-afternoon, the fire crossed over the 2820 road on the northwest side of the fire, about halfway between the 28 road and East Mill Creek Road. It pushed toward King Mountain with roughly 1,000 acres of growth to the northwest; Harney County Sheriff's office made evacuation notifications to the Trout Creek area. On the northeastern perimeter the fire was actively burning interior of control lines 1.5 miles northeast of Elephant Butte. It was influenced by light southeasterly winds and hot, dry, and unstable conditions. Very large air tankers (VLATs) and helicopters responded on the east side of the fire. Crews with engines and a dozer worked the edge of the fire, and more resources are being mobilized to join the effort. Firefighters on the ground continue working to minimize the fire's advances, with crews in the area repositioning and additional crews mobilizing to join the effort.

Yesterday afternoon, Oregon Governor Tina Kotek invoked the Emergency Conflagration Act for the Telephone Fire which allowed the Oregon State Fire Marshal (OSFM) to mobilize four structural task forces and its OSFM Green incident management team to protect homes and critical infrastructure under threat from the fire. One task force went straight to work on the fire last night. The other three task forces will be deployed this morning protecting homes and critical resources on the western and northern flank of the fire. The OSFM team will be in Unified Command with Alaska Incident Management Team 1, working shoulder to shoulder towards reducing risk to nearby communities. Fire crews on Falls and other area fires continue structure protection in any critical areas as needed.

Today, In the Poujade area, Oregon National Guard crews are mopping up in the area of recent small-scale ignition operations. Crews will continue small-scale firing operations along dozer lines on the northeast side of the fire and reinforcing line on the east side to mitigate spread. On the east side, crews will go direct, tying hand lines into dozer lines to anchor in the line. Aerial resources will assist on the Telephone Fire, including our two assigned helicopters and other local lend-lease aircraft, and will use retardant when possible to slow fire spread.

Falls Fire:

Fire pushed north on Thursday and merged with the Sand Fire but is still well within the 31 Road contingency line. Yesterday the Falls Fire had a westward slopover of approximately 800 to 1,000 acres near Gilbert Ridge; crews are directly engaging this area today with dozers and air support. Additionally on Thursday, a slopover occurred in the Whiskey Mountain Fire area. The night shift was able to tie it back into control line, and crews will work to identify all potential heat in the area today and will increase containment depth with mop up operations. South of Myrtle Creek, line continues to hold well and crews are gaining depth within the containment line and address any green islands of vegetation. Line is fully complete around the northeast corner of the Falls fire, with the objective to protect Seneca, Silvies Ranch, and the 395 corridor. Thursday's active fire behavior was a good test of fire line on the south and east sides of the fire, which held.

Sand Mountain Fire:

Firefighters continue work to improve line around Smokey Creek on the northwest side of the fire as well as dozer line to connect to the 31 road to use as indirect line. On Thursday, small-scale ignition operations were conducted on the northwest side of the Sand Fire. Today, dozer line work will continue, and the Arrowhead Hotshots will do

small-scale firing ignitions across Gilbert Ridge, continuing work to tie in line to link the Sand and Falls fires. Crews will strengthen and improve fire line along the north and west flanks of the fire, patrol, and mop up.

Parasol and Poison Fires: The Parasol is completely surrounded with line, and is now in monitor status with light engine presence. The Poison Fire is moving into the mop up and gridding stage; crews are working to gain depth inside the fire line.

Ritter Fire: 100% containment has been reached on the Ritter fire, and it is now in monitor status. The fire camp for the Ritter fire closed on Thursday. Several engines will continue monitoring the area to ensure nothing rekindles during the upcoming time of extreme fire weather.

Weather: Critical fire weather will be in the area Friday and Saturday, bringing extreme heat and likely increased fire behavior. Conditions will be supportive to large fire growth and a **Red Flag Warning** is in effect for today. Winds will be from the south/southwest around 12 mph with gusts up to 18 mph, and high temp up to 102 degrees, with relative humidity at 8-15%. Smoke from the Park Fire in northern California is expected to sit over our area today. Two additional Incident Remote Automated Weather Systems (IRAWS) have been deployed, one by Van and one by Calamity Butte.

Evacuations: The Telephone Fire is pushing toward King Mountain and notifications have been made to the Trout Creek area, which remains in a LEVEL 3 evacuation zone. 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](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100068819321423) Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100068819321423>.

Closures: The Malheur National Forest has issued the new Courtrock Fire Area closure on the Blue Mountain Ranger District, due to fire activity and fire suppression operations. This closure is effective August 1, 2024 and rescinds and replaces the previous Temporary Forest Closure Order. The Closure Area includes the two portions of the Malheur National Forest that run west of 395B, north of Mt. Vernon and south of Long Creek, in the Fox Valley area, including all roads, trails, and camping locations within the fire closure area. A detailed map of the closure is included and available on the Malheur National Forest website (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/malheur/>) and offices.

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.

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

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. Air quality information, searchable by zip code: <https://fire.airnow.gov/>

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