



# McElwain Fire

## Southwestern Land Office

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Fire Protection - Clearwater Unit  
USDI Bureau of Land Management Jurisdiction

**Fire Information:** Kristin Mortenson (406) 381-7451, [Kristin.Mortenson@mt.gov](mailto:Kristin.Mortenson@mt.gov)

**Incident Information:** <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/mtmts-mcelwain-fire>

**Tuesday, August 27, 2024, at 10 a.m.**

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**Location:** 10 miles west of Helmville, Montana

**Start Date:** 8/23/2024

**Cause:** Lightning

**Size:** 176 acres

**Containment:** 5%

### CURRENT STATUS

The McElwain Fire, located 10 miles west of Helmville in Powell County remains at 176 acres in size. The fire is burning in grass and timber on private and Bureau of Land Management land under Montana DNRC wildland fire protection. The fire is comprised of two adjacent fires, a north fire, and a south fire. Fire behavior includes creeping and smoldering with isolated torching. Control line has been established around the south fire and is nearly complete around the north fire. Fallers are working to complete hazard tree removal before firefighters can complete the line. Late day torching of two green trees by the fire perimeter in that area yesterday was controlled by helicopter bucket drops but highlights the importance of securing the area through “snagging” or removing dead, standing trees or other hazard trees before allowing full crew operations into an area. Falling trees are one of the top five causes of firefighter fatality and hazard trees can help fire “slop over” a fireline.

Today, firefighters will work to complete the last section of control line on the north fire and secure all control line by mopping up (extinguishing all flame and heat) one chain (66 feet) deep. The fire is 5% contained with the anticipation that this will increase as line is fully secured.

Resources include four engines, three Type 2 hand crews, one eight-person hand crew (Module), one water tender, four skidgines, and one dozer. A Type 2 DNRC helicopter provided bucket drop support yesterday as needed and will be available today for support as well. Lightning caused the fire.

### WEATHER

A dry cold front is expected today, bringing with it increasing westerly winds with potential gusts up to 30 mph and a slight chance of afternoon thunderstorms with lightning. Cooler temperatures and elevated winds are expected post frontal. A frost is expected for higher elevations Thursday morning.

### EVACUATIONS AND CLOSURES

The Powell County Sheriff’s Office has issued evacuation warnings to residents in the Ledger Road area. Please visit the Powell County Sheriff’s Office Facebook page for specific information and updates.

### ADDITIONAL AREA FIRES

The Hoodoo Fire, a six-acre lightning caused fire on Hoodoo Mountain seven miles southeast of Helmville was contained as of this morning. Eight firefighters are working the difficult to access fire and will be pulled off the fire ahead of the anticipated thunderstorm passage as a safety precaution. The Hoodoo Fire is on BLM land under DNRC wildland fire protection.

Powell County is currently in Stage 1 fire restrictions. Residents and visitors are asked to be extra careful when outdoors to limit human caused sparks. We cannot control the lightning, but we can prevent unintended human caused wildfires. Visit [www.MTFireInfo.org](http://www.MTFireInfo.org) for specific fire restriction information and fire prevention tips. ###