



Swauk Creek Fire - Update
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September 16, 2024

Estimated size: 324 acres

Containment: 35%

Start Date/Time: 9/8/2024 at 3:54 PM

Area of Origin: Adjacent to Highway 97, 14 miles east of Cle Elum, WA

Cause: Vehicle Fire/Under Investigation

Structures Damaged: 0

Update: Yesterday crews were able to strengthen more of the control lines around the south and eastern edges of the fire. They removed unburned fuels impinging on the line and worked to make sure the burned area was cooled with no hotspots that could potentially reignite. With this additional work, containment of the Swauk Creek Fire has increased to 35%. Overnight the fire activity was minimal. Crews continue to staff the fire at night to monitor the fire for any unexpected flare ups.

Today crews will finish preparing for firing operations on the north flank. The plan is to begin firing operations mid-afternoon as long as weather continues to provide favorable conditions. Firing operations and monitoring will continue through the night and into Tuesday. The purpose for the later start is to burn during favorable wind speeds and directions, plus as the weather cools down for the evening and into the early morning. By planning these activities during these hours we are less likely to have unexpected fire behavior.

Smoke will become more visible during the firing operation. We anticipate citizens and travelers to see the smoke from local communities and Highway 97. The fire will be fully staffed during the afternoon, overnight, and into the following day to monitor and maintain control lines on the north flank.

The primary purpose of a firing operation is to safely consume the available fuels ahead of an active fire edge while reducing the potential for negative impacts and resource damage caused by higher-intensity fire. In turn, this improves the ability to contain the fire with direct control lines against the fire's perimeter.

Forest Closures: The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest has area, road, and trail closures due to the Swauk Creek Fire. For a detailed list of closures including a map of the closure area, please visit the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/okawen/alerts-notice/?aid=90533>.



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Road Closures: Highway 97 remains open. Due to the increased flow of fire vehicle traffic traveling in and out of the fire area, we ask that people drive slowly through the area using caution.

Weather and Fire Behavior: A short-lived warming and drying trend arrives today. Temperatures will warm into the upper 60s to 70s today. Humidity levels will be on 10-15% drier than Sunday. The next low-pressure system will drop down the WA coast Tuesday bringing cooler temperatures, increasing clouds, and a 20% change for light showers. Rainfall amounts will be light over the fire. Winds in the afternoon and evening will increase down the Kittitas Valley and across the fire.

Evacuation Levels: Evacuation levels remain the same. They were updated as a precaution; there is no immediate residential threat from this fire. Evacuations can be found on the interactive map. Many Forest Service roads are affected in this area; please review the map if you want to know about a specific location/road.

Live map of active fires from Kittitas County:

<https://kitcogis.maps.arcgis.com/.../minima.../index.html...>

The First Creek area is currently closed to the public.

Notification Level 3 (Go Now) is shown on the map; however, this area has no residential structures.

Notification Level 2 (Get ready)

- Residences east of US 97 north of fire to Liberty Rd
- Forest Service Road 3506 south of fire to Upper Green Canyon Rd

Notification Level 1 (Be Fire Aware)

- The town of Liberty
- All Liberty Rd
- Forest Service Road 9726 and all of its extensions (including Deer Gulch, Pine Gulch, Robinson Gulch, and Harkness Gulch)

Currently, no evacuation notices are issued for residents south of First Creek or west of US Highway 97.

As always, conditions can change quickly; please stay alert and avoid the area if you feel unsafe.

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