

Elk Fire Update

Sunday, October 20, 2024 – 9:00 a.m.



Rocky Mountain Complex Incident Management Team 1

Dan Dallas, Incident Commander



Information Phone: 307-303-7642

Hours: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Email: 2024.Elk@firenet.gov

InciWeb: <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/wybhf-elk-fire-2024>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bighornnf>

Information Linktree: <https://linktr.ee/2024ElkFire>

Special Notes: Evacuations and closures will continue to evolve on the Elk Fire as additional progress is made. Please continue checking the evacuation and closure links below for current information.

As the weather begins to warm back up, pockets of smoke will become visible inside the fire area. Fire managers are aware of these hotspots and will take action as needed. The public can expect to see smoke and should not become alarmed.

Fire managers subdivide the fire perimeter on large fires like the Elk into branches and divisions to ensure effective management and safer operations. These daily updates will describe the fire's activities and our suppression actions within these divisions, which are displayed on the accompanying fire maps. Note that branch numbers and division letters don't always run sequentially to allow for expansion of additional branches/divisions if the fire grows.

Current Situation: The weather system that passed over the Elk Fire on Thursday and Friday dropped about an inch of precipitation, which significantly slowed fire behavior. Fire personnel scouted the fire area yesterday and were not able to access many areas due to the snow and mud.

Division A: Fire managers are developing a structure protection plan should it be needed in the future near Road 120. The Division was unstaffed yesterday due to limited fire behavior and difficult access.

Division Z: Crews checked that all pumps are operational for the Little Horn drainage. They also did some reconnaissance work in Red Canyon. Crews were able to start suppression repair work on dozer lines in the state wildlife area.

Divisions P, M, K: New personnel arrived and scouted these Divisions for suppression repair work on dozer lines. It was too wet yesterday to begin that work, but the work will begin as soon as conditions allow.

Divisions I, H, F: Dozer lines on the SE corner of the fire were too wet to begin repair work yesterday, so fire personnel will reassess when conditions are improved. Crews are focusing on the 26 Road, prepping it to use as an indirect fireline, to its junction with the 16 Road, and will prep that road to its junction with Highway 14. This work includes removing brush and other fuels by limbing trees and removing understory vegetation to eliminate small ladder fuels, which will assist with defending firelines in the event fire activity increases as the drying trend continues.

Division D: Numerous pumps were pulled and staged for potential future use. Fire supervisors are assessing a potential indirect fireline north of Burgess Junction to protect the WY DOT compound and the Forest Service Visitor Center and Work Center. Work continues to prep the 15 Road north to Division A.

Liaison officers will be reaching out to private landowners over the next few days to discuss suppression repair activities. A warming and drying trend is expected to reestablish next week, and smoke could again become visible in the fire area. Firefighting crews will remain alert and ready for any suppression actions that may need to be taken.

Weather, Fuels, and Fire Behavior:

Today will transition back to terrain driven winds with warmer temperatures. Drainage winds will change to easterly upslope flows mid- to late-morning with gusts in the mid-teens. The temperatures will warm a few degrees with highs in the mid-50s at 7,500 feet, which is about 15 degrees above normal. Monday through Tuesday will bring more of a southwest wind flow, with stronger overnight winds, but nothing extreme. There are additional chances for light precipitation Tuesday.

Fire behavior specialists indicated the precipitation was a significant season slowing event, but not necessarily a season ending event. While the precipitation was very beneficial; heavy fuels are still burning within the fire perimeter. An infrared flight last night indicated pockets of heat on the western side of the fire from dead trees on the ground continuing to burn. Smoke may be visible from Sheridan and Story.

Evacuations:

For information on Johnson County evacuations, go to Johnson County Emergency Management's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/JohnsonCoWYEMC> . For info on Sheridan County evacuations and road closures, go to the Sheridan County Emergency Management website: www.tinyurl.com/2s38bcc5 . You can also call the Sheridan County Sheriff's Office (307-672-3455) or Sheridan County Emergency Management (307-752-2174).

Closures:

US Highway 14 is closed between Burgess Junction and Dayton. View the Wyoming Department of Transportation road-closure map here: <https://www.wyoroad.info/> . Bighorn National Forest closure Order No. 02-02-06-24-08 is in effect. The order and map can be viewed here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/bighorn/alerts-notices> .

Elk Fire Statistics:

Size: 96,197 acres | Containment: 48% | Total Personnel: 654 | Location: West of Sheridan, WY
Reported: September 27, 2024 | Cause: lightning