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Highway reopened, Idaho Power restoring electricity after fire reaches Highway 20

VALE, Oregon – Ranchers northeast of Juntura experienced power loss late last night as the Juniper Reservoir Fire reached Highway 20. The highway between Juntura and Jonesboro was closed, but has since reopened. Idaho Power crews are currently on scene restoring power to the affected ranches. The town of Juntura was not affected.

Jason Simmons, the Bureau of Land Management's Vale District Assistant Fire Management Officer, said an engine was working alongside the power company last night to protect the poles, but at least two were overcome by flames. According to Simmons, fire behavior became erratic when winds shifted direction at sunset, and within two hours had reached the highway despite their best efforts.

The fire is currently estimated at 10,000 acres, stretching from a mile north of Juntura at the south edge to about five miles south of Beulah Reservoir at the northern perimeter. The east side of the fire is being held at Stemler Ridge Road; however, Simmons expressed concern about the northeastern corner of that edge which is in old growth juniper in rocky terrain. The contingency plan, according to Simmons, is to build line to hold the fire at Calf Creek Road should it breach the Stemler Ridge line.

Approximately 20 engines are actively engaged in battling the fire, as well as water tenders, dozers and three Type II hand crews. Three single engine air tankers have been employed and one helicopter. Two helicopters assigned to the Ironside Fire are also being shared for use.

Ranchers in the area are receiving updated information on fire behavior that may impact their livestock and range.

In addition to cattle operations, the fire may impact hunters. Critical deer and elk winter range are among the resource values in that area.

Vale District will continue to provide updates as information about the fire is known. When the fire is controlled, information on overall impacts to the area and the rehabilitation strategy will be communicated to the public.

For more information on the Juniper Reservoir Fire, please contact Debbie Lyons at (541) 473-6218.

