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Juniper Reservoir Fire Update

VALE, Oregon – The Juniper Reservoir Fire north of Juntura held at approximately 19,000 acres most of today; however, around 4 p.m. the north end “blew out” towards Beulah Reservoir.

The day began with 32 engines, three single engine air tankers, two helicopters, various dozers and water tenders, and nearly 300 personnel. Incident Command is currently assigned to a Type III team out of Vale and Burns. With the likelihood that this fire will expand in both size and duration, a Type II Incident Management Team has been requested to assume command functions.

Fire crews are working with Idaho Power this afternoon to provide protection to threatened power poles. There remains a possibility that power to the area could once again be affected. Power had been restored early this morning following a Saturday night power outage when two power poles were overcome by flames.

Vale District Rural Fire Department has been providing structure protection to one ranch near Jonesboro since Saturday. With this afternoon’s developments, up to 10 additional homes or outbuildings south of Beulah Reservoir could be at risk. Individuals within the affected area are being notified door-to-door. Burnout operations to protect the structures may be necessary.

Terrain is steep and rocky, and largely inaccessible, making air resources critical.

During today’s air operations, a single engine air tanker inadvertently dropped its load of retardant between Ontario and Vale. Most of the retardant appeared to rain down on a gravel road next to an alfalfa field. One business and one ranch house and outbuildings were speckled with the red-orange substance. Owners were immediately contacted and provided information on the retardant, which is identified as posing no significant hazards according to official material safety data sheets (MSDS) on the product. The MSDS further identifies that the product is no more than slightly irritating to the eyes or skin, and does not pose an inhalation or ingestion hazard. If an individual feels his or her property was affected by the retardant, please contact the Vale District dispatch center at (541) 473-6295.

According to national fire statistics, inadvertent release of retardant is rare: averaging approximately one per year, with thousands of successful drops taking place.

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

