



BIFZ

Burns Interagency Fire Zone



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Wildfire Activity Update – Over 100,000 Acres Burned in Southeastern Oregon

BURNS, Oregon – Oregon’s largest wildfire, the Pueblo Fire, grew to nearly 78,000 acres Wednesday, burning north and east along the east side of Steens Mountain and threatening numerous resources. Several primary residences, main power distribution lines from Oregon to Northern Nevada, and scattered improvements in the area kept firefighters busy with structure protection much of the afternoon. High, erratic winds and extreme fire behavior hampered suppression efforts and suspended air support for several hours.

The Pueblo Fire caused damaged to the infrastructure of the Oregon/Northern Nevada transmission lines leaving area residents without power for a time. Complete losses include one uninhabited structure one Type 6 Engine from the Fields/Andrews Rural Fire Protection Association. The engine was conducting a structure protection mission and experienced mechanical difficulties, forcing the crew to leave the engine behind. No injuries were reported as a result of this breakdown. While activity remained high on the northern flank, several eastern sections of the Pueblo Fire moved across the East Steens Road into the alkali flats of the Alvord Desert. Containment is currently 5 percent.

The Pueblo Fire is just one of three large fires in the South End Complex, which is being managed by Type 1 Incident Management Team Opliger from Southern California. The two other fires in the complex include: 1) the Krumbo Ridge Fire, approximately 8 miles northwest of Frenchglen, Oregon – 0 percent contained at 1,000 acres, and 2) the Granddad Fire, approximately 3 miles northwest of Frenchglen – 5 percent contained at 25,000 acres. As the Granddad Fire continues to move east, several recreational cabins, livestock, primitive campsites and designated campgrounds are threatened.

Aside from the three large incidents, the South End Complex also encompasses a group of unstaffed fires on Steens Mountain – all of which are currently showing no activity but are considered uncontained at this point. In addition, numerous fires of undetermined cause were discovered in the Krumbo Ridge/Granddad Fire area Wednesday afternoon. The cause is still under investigation.

While Opliger’s Incident Management Team handles the South End Complex, the Burns Interagency Fire Zone continues administration of initial attack efforts and suppression of other area fires including the Crater Fire and the Harney Lake Complex. The Crater Fire, located 4 miles east of Buena Vista, Oregon, is estimated around 9,000 acres and 15 percent contained. Late evening winds kept fire activity high, creating a potential threat to ranches in that area. The Harney Lake Complex, located along the northeast and southeast corners of Harney Lake, is a combination of 6 fires totaling approximately 7,000 acres and is 100 percent contained.



Several local road closures and evacuations have been put in place as a result of the high fire activity. Those include:

- 1) Moon Hill Road closed from the junction at Diamond to the Steens Mountain Loop Road
- 2) Steens Mountain Loop Road closed from Page Springs Campground to the East Rim Overlook
- 3) Malheur National Wildlife Refuge North Center Patrol Road closed from the junction at Fields Station south to the junction at Buena Vista Pond
- 4) Fish Lake and Jackman Park Campgrounds on Steens Mountain are under a mandatory evacuation
- 5) Page Springs Campground is under a recommended evacuation
- 6) East Steens Road closed from the junction at Fields north approximately 25-30 miles
- 7) Alvord Hot Springs and Wildhorse Canyon area residences are under a mandatory evacuation
- 8) Recreation use at Diamond Craters is strongly discouraged

The Catlow Valley Road through Long Hollow, south to Fields and on toward Denio was closed earlier in the week but has been reopened to through traffic. All road closures and evacuations still in place will remain effective until further notice. Travelers are encouraged to avoid these areas if at all possible.

Weather for today may bring needed relief to firefighters. An upper level trough is expected with only a slight chance of thunderstorms, considerably cooler temperatures and low wind speeds. The cooler temperatures and minimal winds are expected for Friday as well.

Fire base camp for the Incident Management Team and resources assigned to the South End Complex will be set up south of Frenchglen in the Home Creek area. Staging for resources assigned to the Burns Interagency Fire Zone is at the Harney County Fairgrounds. Visitors and residents can expect increased traffic on roadways in these areas.

Fire danger is rated **VERY HIGH** and the Industrial Fire Precaution Level is at a level 4. A regulated fire closure and public use restrictions for all public lands within the BIFZ are in effect.

For more information on current fire activity or public use restrictions, call (541) 573-4519. For 24-hour recorded information, call (541) 573-4555. South End Complex fire information can be found on the web at www.inciweb.org.

To report a wildfire, call (541) 573-1000.

