

**NEWS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Lightning starts continue to challenge southeast Oregon

**VALE, Oregon** – Active storm cells moving across southeastern Oregon have already scorched more than 160,000 acres in the Bureau of Land Management's Vale District this season. "That's about four times our average for a typical year," said Mike Hartwell, Vale District Fire Management Officer; adding, "it looks like we could be in for more if current weather predictions hold true."

Yesterday's activity caused one late afternoon start: Coyote Butte (south of Rome), estimated at 906 acres late today; and three starts just before midnight yesterday: Moores Hollow (northwest of Ontario); Bridge Gulch (west of Weiser), and Star Mountain (south of Juntura).

By late this afternoon, Moores Hollow was mapped at 3,222 acres. A handful of engine crews from Vale and rural fire departments had constructed nearly 12 miles of fire line to divide the interior of the fire from both I-84 and the Snake River Correctional Institution. Todd Gregory, Incident Commander, anticipated containment by 8 this evening, barring a shift in weather.

Rural fire crews were the primary resource on the Bridge Gulch Fire along highway 201 outside of Weiser. That fire was recorded at 1,000 acres late this afternoon.

"We couldn't have responded the way we were able to on these two fires without the help of the rurals," said Hartwell. "Lt. Craig Smith [Malheur County Emergency Services] was here last night," said Hartwell, "and he was instrumental in coordinating all of the rural support. He did a great job, and we're very thankful for the local support we've received with the federal resources in such high demand by us and our neighboring districts." Weiser, Payette, Vale, Ontario, Nyssa, Cambridge, and Huntington have all contributed to this latest effort.

The Star Mountain Fire is currently the most active, at 10,000 acres. Two MAFFS C-130 aircraft have been providing assistance out of Klamath Falls. Other air resources have been provided by Burns and Boise throughout the day as availability allowed. On the ground resources have varied throughout the day. There is no estimated containment on this fire at this time.

No road closures or campground closures are in effect within the Vale District at the time of this release; however, the public is advised to avoid areas affected by these fires. Users of public land are also reminded that fire restrictions are in place on BLM, Forest Service and State protected lands. The public is required to follow current restrictions that apply to the use of campfires, driving off roads, smoking, burning, and other outdoor activities.

For more information on restrictions within the Vale District BLM, please contact 541-473-3144. To report a wildfire, please call 911.

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**BLM**