

**NEWS RELEASE
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Smoke from Stemler Ridge Fire currently not impeding motorists

VALE, Oregon -- Fire crews are currently on scene battling a 1,200-acre fire between Juntura and Jonesboro. The Stemler Ridge fire was reported at approximately 9 p.m. last night, and Vale District BLM's firefighting crews arrived on scene within 45 minutes. The fire is presumed to be lightning caused. It started at the top of the ridge, and there were four lightning strikes reported in the area last evening. The fire made its way down to Highway 20 and also moved up the ridge.

Oregon Department of Transportation is on scene. The main concern for motorists this morning was smoke on the highway. As of 10 a.m. this morning, Incident Commander Todd Gregory said the inversion layer had lifted, and the canyon was pretty clear. It should not be necessary to close the highway unless conditions significantly change. Gregory reported most of the activity was to the north and west, away from the highway.

The terrain is categorized as steep and rugged with juniper in the area. Additional resources began arriving on scene early this morning.

For additional information on this fire, please contact Debbie Lyons at (541) 473-6218. Updates will also be provided at www.blm.gov/or.

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