



Fire Update Motorway Complex



Friday, 08/21/2015, 8:00a.m.

For Immediate Release

Facts at a Glance

Size: Approximately 20,000 Acres

Date Started: 08/14/2015

Percent Containment:

5% - Woodrat, Other fires in the Complex are at 0% containment

Personnel: Approximately 205 personnel that includes three, Type 1 and Type 2 Initial Attack hand crews, various support personnel. Additional resources arrived last night and will be incoming throughout the day.

Equipment: 3 heavy equipment modules, 18 engines, 5 water tenders, 3 Dozers

Cause: Lightning

Aircraft Assigned: Shared resources

Cooperating Agencies: US Forest Service; Clearwater and Idaho counties; Clearwater Potlatch Timber Protective Association; Nez Perce Tribe; Idaho State Police, Idaho Transportation Department

The Motorway Complex is comprised of several fires on the Lochsa-Powell, North Fork, and Moose Creek Ranger Districts including Woodrat, Big Hill, Wash, Slide, and a group of fires located near the Lolo Motorway. The Woodrat fire has also burned onto lands managed by the Maggie Creek Protection District. The Motorway Complex, like many other fires in the area, is the result of recent lightning storms. Rick Kusicko's North Idaho Incident Management Team (IMT) assumed command of the Complex at 7:00 a.m. today. The Motorway Complex, Incident Command Post (ICP), is established at the Kooskia airstrip.

To aid the general public with the large amount of fire information, Fire Information officers from all teams within the Kamiah and Kooskia areas will be coordinating the dissemination of information. Within the Motorway Complex, the Woodrat, Slide, and Wash fires will be listed individually. The fires located near the Lolo Motorway, approximately 7 miles east of Pierce and Weippe, will be identified as the Motorway fires.

- **Woodrat** - The Woodrat fire is actively burning in steep, rugged ground 1 mile north and west of the community of Syringa. Due to Wednesday's fire movement the Idaho County Sheriff's Office issued a Level II evacuation warning for the Syringa and Smith Creek road areas. The fire is also a threat to residences in the Suttler Creek Drainage and along Highway 12.

Local crews have made good headway on the west, northwest, and southwest flanks of the fire. Yesterday, firefighters capitalized and continued to secure containment line. Crews will continue structure assessments along Smith Creek road and the Syringa area. Dozer line on the southwest end of the fire has been constructed and tied into local roads in the area; however, much of that line is indirect and will need further improvements to be secure containment line. Crews made great progress on the southeast corner of the fire connecting roads and dozer line towards Smith Creek road as well as structure protection and contingency lines around Syringa.

Today, crews are working strenuously to construct and reinforce existing line along the south and east flanks of the fire. Constructed lines will be a combination of hand line and dozer line. A structure protection specialist and structure protection engines will be incorporated into efforts in Syringa and the surrounding area. As new resources become available they will be mobilized where needed.

Syringa area residents should remain vigilant to changing conditions, as a Red Flag Warning Friday could result in extreme fire behavior and potential safety issues for both firefighters and the public.

- **Slide** - The Slide fire is burning in open pine and Douglas fir stands on steep south facing slopes above the Selway River. Fire spread has not been significant in the last 48 hours and is primarily moving up-river. The fire is a potential threat to homes, private holdings, and the Historic Fenn Ranger Station to the east.

Yesterday, crews continued assessing and prepping homes for structure protection along the Selway road from CCC trail down river to the Fenn Ranger Station. In addition, fire personnel will also begin to evaluate the wooden bridges along the Selway River that have the potential to be impacted by advancing fire.

Today, crews will continue to lay hose and prepare structures for protection along the Selway River. Crews are

also building line on the west, to try to stop down-river progression. The fire has stalled in its progression to the north in brush fields along the upper ridges. Predicted strong winds throughout the day could push the fire up slope in a northerly direction.

- **Wash** – The Wash fire is actively burning 8 miles east of Lowell, Idaho and approximately 5 miles east of the homes located south of the Selway River, just south and east of the Slide fire. The fire is threatening grazing allotments and could be a potential threat to other areas to the south and west. Fire activity is being assessed to notify permittees and identify structures for protection. The Selway River Road #223 is closed from O'Hara Bridge, at the junction of O'Hara Road #651, to the junction of Falls Point Road #443. Ten trails that access the closed segment of Road 223 are also closed: Trails #702; 703; 704; 705; 707; 708; 709; 710; 725 and 734. The above restrictions are necessary for public safety due to wildfire activity.

The fire is currently estimated at 5,000 acres, burning in heavy fir and cedar along the north facing slopes of the Selway River, and dense contiguous fuels have limited fire manager's opportunities to check southerly spread. Fire behavior has been erratic and the fire has grown rapidly up slope and up canyon. A Type 1 Incident Management Team has been ordered for the Wash fire, but will continue to be managed by Rick Kusicko's team until they arrive.

- **Motorway** – The Motorway fires are located in the area referred to as the Lolo Motorway and include Lost Hat, 535, and Musselshell Creek fires. Some of these fires are impacting local grazing allotments and have the potential to affect the communities of Pierce and Weippe. Currently crews are assessing and opening roads to access the fire perimeter and construct line. On the Musselshell Creek fire, an anchor point has been established along the 535 road, and crews are trying to tie fire perimeter into that anchor point. Structures currently threatened by the Motorway fires are Forest Service facilities and infrastructure. Structure protection assessments and actions are currently underway in those areas.

The National Weather Service in Missoula has issued a Red Flag Warning, from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Friday for gusty winds and low relative humidity. These conditions could result in significant fire growth on many fires in the Motorway Complex, as well as create unsafe conditions for firefighters and the public. Reducing risk to firefighters and the public is the first priority in every fire management activity.

Evacuations: Level II evacuations are in place for Syringa, Smith Creek road, and Suttler Creek road, and residents should remain alert to rapidly changing conditions. Level II evacuations indicate that residents need to be prepared to leave their homes at a moment's notice.

Road Closures & Special Announcements: Significant Forest area closures are in affect and additional closures in the Selway River may be forthcoming due to wildfire activity. Closures can be located at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/nezperceclearwater/alerts-notices>. Please check back regularly as conditions and closures change frequently.

For more info: Please contact the fire information line, at 208-926-4170 or motorwaycomplex@gmail.com if you have questions concerning the complex. As always, check fire information and updates on <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov>. Once on the specific fire in the incident, you can choose to follow the fire updates via Twitter, Facebook, and other social media outlets.

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