



Washington IMT 2 Incident Commander – Bob Johnson
ODF Incident Commander – Russ Lane

36 Pit Fire Update September 24, 2014 – 11:00 AM

FIRE INFORMATION WEBSITE: <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4106/>

FIRE FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/mthoodnf?ref=hl>

INFO PHONE: 360-280-4352 or 503-630-1711

Office Hours: 8:00 am -8:00 pm

EMAIL: 36pitfire@gmail.com

** A community meeting is scheduled for tonight, September 24th at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Estacada First Baptist Church – 29101 SE Eagle Creek Rd. The objective of the meeting will be to update the community on the current fire situation and the operational outlook over the next week.

Firefighters are wrapping up the northwest and northern perimeter of the fire located north of Highway 224 and removing hose from fire lines. At the southern perimeter of the fire located south of Highway 224, crews continue to mop up, and are using thermal imaging cameras to find and extinguish hot spots. Today, firefighters intend to complete containment lines at the northwest corner of the fire located south of the main stem of the Clackamas River and west of the South Fork of the Clackamas River. Stopping the progression of the fire toward the west continues to be the priority.

Overnight, approximately a ½ inch of rain fell on the fire area. More rain is predicted for today. The rain will slow the fire spread and lower fire intensity (flame length) allowing firefighters to directly attack the fire front and put out hot spots adjacent to the fire line. In heavily forested areas, much of the rain is intercepted by the tree canopy and may not reach some areas of the forest floor, but greatly increases the relative humidity. Heavy dead fuels are still very dry and have moisture contents as low as 13-14 percent. A fire season ending event of heavy rain and long duration is needed to make the fuels less flammable. Rain also exposes firefighters to additional safety hazards due to slick walking and driving conditions.

In order to contain the fire within the South Fork of the Clackamas River at the south, firefighters are “prepping” roads to be used as indirect containment lines outside the wilderness area. “Prepping of roads consists of removing understory small trees and brush. This decreases the intensity of fire and strengthens containment lines should the fire approach. We are working to minimize acres burned while evaluating firefighter success versus their exposure to risk.

Minimum impact suppression tactics (MIST) are being implemented in portions of the fire located in congressionally designated wilderness areas. Examples of MIST tactics include building the necessary but minimum width and depth of fire lines or cutting small trees and brush flush to the ground.

Helicopters with water buckets and other aircraft will be used as necessary to support crews on the ground today. Two Type 1 heavy helicopters, one medium Type 2 helicopter, and two light Type 3 helicopters are currently assigned to the fire.

The fire is now estimated to be 5,508 acres in size and at 55 percent contained. The 78 acre spot fire located to the northwest of the main fire is now completely mopped up with no hot spots or smoke visible. Hazards to crews include: extremely steep terrain presenting crews with footing difficulties; rolling debris; and fire weakened trees. Heavy deep fuels also present challenges to contain the fire.

Investigators have determined that the 36 Pit Fire started as the result of bullet fragments igniting fine dry fuels at the origin area of the fire. Investigators confirmed this finding with witness observations, fire progression maps, and physical evidence collected at the specific origin area. The fire started in an area popular with target shooters. Information gathered up to this point indicates that the fire was not intentionally caused and the 36 Pit was open to recreational target shooting at the time of the incident.

Although the Forest Service supports responsible target shooting, shooters should also be aware that bullets with steel components and solid copper jackets impacting rocks or metal have the potential to produce hot fragments which can readily cause a fire, given the right weather and fuel conditions. For information about how rifle bullets can ignite a fire please visit the following website: http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_rp104.pdf. **This has been an extraordinarily hot and dry summer. Shooters should be aware of this and ensure that they prepare accordingly.**

Witness interviews are still being conducted. Anyone with information relevant to the investigation should contact Phil Huff at 503-668-1686.

**The Lazy Bend Camp and Work Center are evacuated and closed.
Promontory Park is closed.
The La Dee OHV area is closed.**

ROAD CLOSURES: ODOT has opened Highway 224 to residents and workers only with valid identification. For more information go to: www.oregon.gov/odot or tripcheck.com (maintained by Oregon Department of Transportation for road and weather conditions).

The public is urged to be aware of increased fire related traffic on local roads and to drive defensively. For information related to evacuations, please go to: <http://www.clackamas.us> or call 503-655-8224. **Information related to smoke can be found at: www.oregonSmoke.blogspot.com. For more information on the 36 Pit Fire, please use the contacts listed above.**

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