

Chetco East Zone Fire Update

Saturday, September 9, 2017 – 9:00 a.m.

<https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/5385/>
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Friday was the first day of a drying and warming trend over the **Chetco East Zone Fire** area that will continue through Monday. Thursday's wetting rain reduced fire activity providing a good opportunity for crews to continue making progress on fire line construction. However, fuels were only temporarily dampened and are already beginning to dry out. A fourth new fire, ignited by lightning Thursday, came to life and was controlled by Wild Rivers Ranger District firefighters. Dean Warner, Fire Behavior Analyst with Northwest Incident Management Team #13, observed that roads are already drying out and vehicles are kicking up dust again.

Today's temperatures are expected to reach 84 degrees in the valleys and 72 degrees on the ridges. The minimum relative humidity will be in the 30's. Winds of 4-8 mph are expected out of the north. With warming temperatures and lower relative humidity, fire activity is expected to be primarily smoldering and creeping, with low possibility of short uphill runs. Spotting is not expected.

With clearing skies on Friday, fire managers were able to fly helicopters for reconnaissance of fire activity. Although most of the **Chetco East Zone Fire** is quiet with little heat along the perimeter, there was significant smoke being produced on the north perimeter of the fire at the "horseshoe" bend in the Illinois River around South Bend Mountain and also near Heather Mountain.

Approximately 40 miles of old Biscuit Fire containment dozer lines have been reopened and completed east of the fire. New sections of dozer line were completed east of York Butte (2 miles) and west of Chrome Ridge to Flat Top (3.5 miles). Today hand crews will work along a rocky area above the headwaters of Parker Creek to improve an existing hand line to connect dozer lines. Others will continue progressing north toward Bear Camp. As containment lines are completed farther to the North and fire behavior moderates, more direct fireline routes will be scouted. If there are safe, accessible anchor points closer to the fire, then "direct" firelines can be built closer to the areas that are currently burning.

The Oregon National Guard is assisting with several efforts associated with the Chetco Bar Fire. Approximately 214 are serving as firefighters, roadblock security and support in Curry County. In the East Zone (Josephine County), ten are providing security at road closures and approximately twenty are supporting 3 National Guard Type 1 helicopters.

Fire Size: The entire **Chetco Bar Fire** is about **184,208 acres**. The fire edge remains approximately 8-10 miles west of private land and communities along Highway 199 in Josephine County.

Other activities: Today, uniformed Illinois Valley Fire District personnel will be conducting structure assessments in the communities of O'Brien (Lone Mountain, Naue Way), Cave Junction (Westside Rd, Airport Rd) and Selma (Illinois River Rd). They are collecting information about the number and condition of buildings (roofing material, driveway access, vegetation type, slopes) that will be important for future fire protection. They record this fire safety information in case it is needed in the future. There is not an imminent fire risk now.

Smoke: Heavy smoke has affected Josephine County for many days. A welcome partial clearing of smoke in the valleys was observed Friday. Today's smoke level in Grants Pass and Cave Junction is forecast as **"unhealthy"**. This means more people than average may have breathing problems. Everyone should limit time outdoors if possible and avoid exercising outdoors. People with asthma, respiratory infection, diabetes, lung or heart disease, or have had a stroke should avoid all physical outdoor activity. Public information about forest fires and smoke conditions is available at <http://oregonsmoke.blogspot.com>.

Closures and Restrictions: Many areas and activities are closed or restricted due to current and expected fire activity and hazard. More details are available on <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/closures/5385/> The BLM has closed its trailhead at Eight Dollar Mountain. The Oregon National Guard is now providing 24-hour staffing at closure area roadblocks on Illinois River Road and Eight Dollar Mountain Road.

In Josephine County, a **Level 1 “Ready” Evacuation Notification** affects private and BLM land on the west side of Hwy 199 from Hayes Hill to the California border. This action is intended to raise awareness of fire in the vicinity and get people thinking about necessary steps they would take if asked to evacuate. About ten miles along the Illinois River Road from the National Forest boundary located two miles west of Selma to Oak Flat is under **Level 3 “Go” Evacuation Notification**. Residents were advised to leave this area and it is closed to everyone except firefighting personnel. People can view maps of the current Evacuation Notification areas at <http://arcg.is/1LmzPe>. By typing their address into the search bar on the upper right, they can see where their home is located in relation to the current Evacuation warnings.

There is a **Community Meeting** planned for Sunday, September 10 at 6:00 pm at the Illinois Valley High School in Cave Junction. People are encouraged to attend to receive an update on fire activity and to talk to fire managers about their strategies and effort.

Fire at a Glance:

Size: 184,208 acres

Started: July 12, 2017 by Lightning

Containment: 5%

Resources:

Helicopters shared across the Chetco Bar Fire: 2 Type 3; 2 Type 2;

1 Type 1; 3 National Guard Type 1

Ground resources on the Chetco East Zone: 7 Type 2 crews; 9 Engines; 6 Fallers; 6 Dozers; 2 Water Tenders; 2 Masticators; 1 Skidder



Bureau of Land Management



Oregon State Fire Marshal



Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest



Oregon Department of Forestry



Illinois Valley Fire District