



FIRE BRIEFING

Wednesday, August 13, 2014 0800 hrs

Devil's Elbow Complex Fire Information
509 634-2070

The **Devil's Elbow Complex** is four wildfires that are located on the Colville Indian Reservation in northeastern Washington. They were ignited by lightning that passed through the area on August 2. The "Timm Brothers Ranch Fire (161)" near the Columbia River west of Nespalem was controlled at approximately 250 acres and is now "out".

Three fires are currently burning on both sides of the San Poil River Valley, approximately 25 miles south of Republic and 10 miles north of Keller. These started out as the Cub Creek Fire (165), the Central Peak Fire (160), and the Deadhorse Fire (164), but they have now merged into one fire across the valley. They are burning timber, grass, brush, litter, and heavy slash that resulted from the wind storm two years ago. The terrain is very steep and rocky. As of today, over 20,400 acres have burned.

Hwy 21 is closed from the Bear Creek Campground to the Bridge Creek Road. The San Poil River Road is also closed north of the Bridge Creek Road. The Central Peak area and roads that access it are closed. The Keno Mine & Thirtymile area and roads that access it are also closed. The route from Nespalem to Inchelium (Cache Creek Road to Hwy 21 to Bridge Creek Road) remains open. People travelling through the area are warned to be cautious. Emergency personnel, fire equipment and smoke are likely to be present throughout the area. Roads may be temporarily closed with no notice due to fire activity. This is to protect firefighter and public safety.

Approximately 150 homes and 90 other structures located nearby in the San Poil Valley along Highway 21 and the San Poil River Road are threatened. One abandoned house and two outbuildings have burned. Currently, Level 3 Evacuations are in place for Hwy 21 from Capoose Creek to the Bear Creek Campground. Approximately 32 people have left their homes. A shelter is available at the Keller Community Center. Level 2 and Level 1 Evacuation notices are also in effect to the north and south of this core area.

Closures and evacuation notices have been subject to changes as needed to protect firefighter and public safety. An Evacuation Plan has been developed by local law enforcement (Tribal Police, Ferry County Sheriff's Office) and the fire managers. The Plan includes specific action points that will trigger additional evacuation notifications if needed, based on current and anticipated fire behavior.

Frequently asked Questions from people in the Republic Area:

- **Is the fire going to burn our town?** No. It is extremely unlikely that the fires of the Devil's Elbow Complex will reach Republic. Although the fuel (dead logs, dry grass, live brush and trees) is very dry and burns easily, fire movement is hindered by broken topography and the wet valley bottom. A Fire Behavior Analyst has calculated that, without suppression action, this fire would move approximately 1 mile north per day. There is suppression action,

including the use of air tanker planes, to cool the most active fire fronts and slow its movement to hold it within the planned containment lines. The current north containment lines are at approximately the South Nanamkin Road, the Twentyfive Mile Road, and newly built dozer line leading to the Keno Mine Trail. If the fire should pass these lines, there are contingency lines at approximately the North Nanamkin Road and the Twentyone Mile Road where firefighters will make an effort slow or stop its spread well before Republic.

- **When will Hwy 21 reopen?** Effort is being made to reopen Hwy 21 and allow evacuated residents to return to their homes by Saturday, August 16.
- **Why is our town so smoky?** Smoke from wildfires rises or sinks, persists or disperses based on regional weather and daily patterns. The general air flow pattern through the region is west to east and south to north, hence, Republic is right in line for smoke coming up the San Poil Valley in the daytime, which often settles to the valley bottoms during cool nights.
- **How is the fire management effort going?** It is going well. There are currently 816 firefighters which include seven 20-person Type I “Hotshot” crews, twenty-four 20-person Type II crews, 44 engines (usually staffed with 3 firefighters), and five helicopters working to contain the Devil’s Elbow Complex. There are initial containment lines constructed with dozers and hand crews completely surrounding the fire. Many of these lines were based on existing roads that have been brushed out or burned out to widen the effective barrier to fire. These lines require additional improvement before they will be considered secure, hence the fire is only “10% contained”, but progress in the last few days has been rapid.
- **Who is managing this fire?** When fires grow too large for the local suppression resources, especially during high levels of initial attack, they can request assistance from surrounding jurisdictions or the state. A fire of this size and complexity is managed by a Type 2 Incident Management Team. Washington has five such teams that each include about 50 members who have trained and worked together for many years. Washington’s Team #4 was requested by the Colville Confederated Tribes Mt. Tolman Fire Center on August 4, spent a day transitioning with the local managers, and took command on August 5. The Incident Commander is Larry Nickey.
- **Where can I get fire information?** A Type 2 Incident Management Team includes a “Public Information Officer” whose job is to inform the public and media about the fire situation. We have established a temporary fire information office with a phone (509) 634-2070 that is answered from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. It has an answering machine if personnel are temporarily unable to answer the phone. “Inciweb” (<http://inciweb.nwcg.gov>) is also a standardized national system of incident information websites. The Devil’s Elbow Complex has created a page on inciweb at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4059/>. This inciweb site includes a summary, maps, photographs, and daily postings of updates on the fire situation. Ferry County Search and Rescue volunteers are

also helping to disperse information to major public areas, offices and commercial sites around Republic and other towns north of the fire until the fire is more contained and people feel more informed and confident.

- **Where should I report new fires?** Call “911” or the Mt. Tolman Fire Center 509 634-3100.
- **What can I do?** Never panic or spread rumors. Seek reliable information from the Fire Information Office 509 634-2070, the inciweb website, posted notices, or local law enforcement. There are many programs with information about preparing your home and family for future wildfire, power outage or earthquake. Take action today to improve your readiness.

Evacuation Notification Levels

Evacuation Notification Levels are based on the concept “1, 2, 3; Ready, Set, Go”. Level 1 is the least urgent. Level 3 is the most urgent.

Level 1 – A **Level 1 Evacuation means ALERT**. Residents should be aware of the danger that exists in their area, and monitor local media outlets for information. Residents with special needs (such as a susceptibility to breathing problems in wildfire or those with animals/pets) should take note and begin making arrangements to evacuate. For wildfires, smoke can often cause the most problems for residents, especially those sensitive to smoke and animals. Evacuations at this time are voluntary.

Level 2 – A **Level 2 Evacuation means BE READY**. This level indicates there is significant danger to your area, and residents should either voluntarily relocate to a shelter or with family/friends outside of the affected area, or if choosing to remain, to be ready at a moment’s notice.

Level 3 – A **Level 3 Evacuation means LEAVE IMMEDIATELY**. Danger to your area is current or imminent, and you should leave immediately. Listen to local media, and watch for emergency personnel who may be coming by to give further instructions regarding the evacuation.