

Multiple Highway 97 Brush Fires are Suspected Arson

by Cheryl McDermott

Three fast-moving brush fires between Redmond and Bend on Highway 97 broke out within minutes of each other on Sunday about 1:30 p.m., and Deschutes County officials have determined that they were intentionally set.

Three fires on Highway 97 which began within minutes of each other on Sunday are believed to be arson. Photos by Richard Burton. The fires were quickly controlled and there were no injuries or damage to any structures, according to Fire Inspector Dan Derlacki with Bend Fire. Crews remained on scene for hours to watch for flare-ups.

The first of the fires reported on August 27 near the Redmond Greenhouse was quickly extinguished, said Derlacki.

The second fire burned one half acre north of the on/off ramp at Deschutes Junction, on the west side of the southbound lanes of Highway 97.

Just three minutes later, a third brush fire was reported on the same side of the highway near Fort Thompson Road, just two miles further south. Over five acres burned trees, grass and brush.

Fire personnel from multiple agencies responded, including Bend Fire, Oregon Department of Forestry, Deschutes County Sheriff's Office, and Oregon State Police.

The fire remains under investigation. Anyone with information is requested to contact the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office at 541.388.6655 during business hours, or 541.833.0170 after hours.

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