

Central Oregon Lightning Storm Sparks New Blazes

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Firefighters continue to suppress several new fires that started as a result of a lightning storm moving through central Oregon early this week. The storm tracked from south to north on the east side of the Cascade Mountains, putting down approximately 200 strikes and little moisture, according to the Central Oregon Interagency Dispatch Center.

The Walther Fire south of Prineville near Prineville Reservoir was reported at 6 p.m. Monday night. Crews worked all night to establish lines around the incident and were able to hold it through the burning period Tuesday. Incident 876, which started Monday on the Crooked River National Grassland, was also held to 5 acres.

The largest of the new fires is the Pine Ridge Fire, burning in juniper, ponderosa pine, grass and sagebrush east of Bend and south of Highway 20. Strong winds pushed this fire to 500 acres Tuesday, August 29. The fire is staffed with six engines.

Crews are also working on a 100-acre fire on the north side of the Crooked River National Grasslands. Incident #890 is currently staffed with two helicopters, a single engine air tanker, air attack, two agency engines and two contract engines. In addition, Jefferson County Fire and several local landowners have been providing suppression support. The cause of this fire is still under investigation.

Initial attack crews have also responded to several other small lightning starts on BLM and Forest Service managed lands in the area. As of Wednesday, none of these fires had burned more than \hat{A} ¹/₄ acre.

The increasing temperatures predicted for Labor Day weekend prompted officials to remind residents and visitors to central Oregon to take extra care with fire when heading out to public lands.

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