Arson Suspected in Multiple Area Fires

by K_Guice

Three fires that spanned from Redmond to Bend along Hwy. 97 on Sunday, August 27, are being investigated as potential arson, according to officials.

â€œWe had three fires,â€• said Dan Derlacki, a fire inspector with the City of Bend Fire Department. â€œThe first one started in Redmond on the west side of the highway.â€•

That fire burned about an acre or so, according to Derlacki.

Several minutes later, Bend received a call about another blaze down the highway also on the west side of the highway. Approximately 1 Â½ acres were burned.

Three fires on Highway 97 which began within minutes of each other on Sunday are believed to be arson. Photo by Richard Burton. â€œAbout three minutes later, we received a call about another fire down the highway,â€• Derlacki said. That fire burned 5 Â¼ acres of Deschutes County land north of Fort Thompson Rd.

Both cities fire departments worked on their respective blazes assisted by the Oregon Department of Forestry and the United States Forest Service.

The Oregon Department of Transportation, Deschutes County Sheriff's Office and Oregon State Police were also called in to assist with traffic control and the investigation.

â€œWe did have one lane of the highway closed near our second fire for most of the afternoon due to the amount of firefighters on the scene and for our safety,â€• Derlacki said.

While there were no structures damaged and no one was hurt, he said there will be an ongoing investigation.

â€œAll fire agencies take arson very seriously,â€• Derlacki said. It takes away personnel and resources that could be needed in other parts of the city.

Due to the large number of resources needed for this fire, the department had to call in off-duty personnel to ensure enough crews were available for any additional emergencies in the city.

â€œIf the fire is found to be malicious, it can be charged as arson,â€• Derlacki said. Anyone charged in the crime could potentially be held liable for the cost of the fire.

â€œIn anyone does have information, we ask that they please call the Deschutes County Sheriffâ€™s Office at 388-6655 or 693-6911,â€• he said.

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