

Brushfire Threatens Apartment Complex, Caused by ladder sparking power line

by Richard Burton

A billboard contractor changing a sign along Wilson Avenue started a fast moving brushfire which threatened an apartment complex Thursday when his ladder touched an overhead power line, authorities said.

Over two dozen personnel from the Bend Fire Department, Oregon Department of Forestry, United States Forest Service, Burlington Northern Railroad, and the Bend Police Department responded to 625 SE 9th Street, an area along railroad tracks south of Wilson Avenue, at about 3:30 p.m. September 28.

Crews found a fast-moving fire on the east of the railroad tracks which run south of Wilson Avenue. All trains were stopped along the tracks, and southeast Wilson was closed to traffic for an hour while crews quickly contained the one-acre fire before it crossed the railroad tracks into a back yard of an apartment complex. The apartment complex was spared, but vending machines owned by Pro-Vend Services which were stored outside received an estimated \$10,000 in damage.

There were no injuries, reported Fire Inspector Dan Derlacki with the Bend Fire Department.

Investigation determined that the fire was caused by a billboard contractor, Billboard Services, who was replacing a sign on behalf of Carlson Sign Company, said Derlacki. The contractor's ladder touched an overhead power line attached to the sign; sparks and hot slag then fell to the ground igniting the dry vegetation below.

The inspector reminds everyone to "Look up before moving any ladder. You never know what is above you and what your ladder could touch."

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