

News Release

Umatilla National Forest

Washington Department of Natural Resources

Don Ferguson, Incident Information Officer

509-843-5143

Joani Bosworth, Public Affairs – Umatilla National Forest

541-278-3734

School fire 20% Contained

August 8, 2005 7:00 p.m.

Pendleton, Oregon: The School Fire, a wildfire located 16 miles south and west of Pomeroy, Wa., has burned over 37,000 acres and continues to burn actively in steep terrain. However firefighters made good progress today and have the fire 20% contained. Additional firefighting resources arrived last night bringing total personnel assigned to the fire to 1,340 and more continuing to arrive. One firefighter was injured in an ATV accident on the fire. He was taken to the hospital and released and is currently on his way home.

The west and northeast flanks of the fire are looking good. Crews currently are constructing fireline around the southwest corner. Dense smoke held down by an inversion has limited visibility in the area of the fire and as far east as Lewiston, Id. The fire has burned actively in the afternoons when the inversion layer lifts. This afternoon's active burning occurred on the south and southeast flanks of the fire.

A community meeting to provide information on the fire is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. tonight at the High School in Pomeroy, Wa., by the Incident Management Team. A meeting is also being scheduled for tomorrow night (Tuesday) in Dayton, Wa. The location of the meeting will be posted on the Umatilla National Forest website at www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma once it is determined.

The loss of 35 residence structures has been confirmed and over 175 structures are still threatened at this time. Evacuations were made over the weekend in the Stentz Springs, Rose Springs, Baker's Pond, and Lynnvile Gulch Road areas. ***Due to the active and unpredictable nature of the fire, public and employee safety is the number one priority. Non-authorized people in the vicinity of the fire places both the public and firefighters at risk. The public is asked to honor all current road and area closures.***

Heart-to-Heart for Families has set up a drop-off center for families who have lost their homes. Clothes, household items, and non-perishable food items are being accepted at 718 Main Street in Pomeroy. Monetary donations can be taken at any branch of Sterling Savings or U.S. Bank. Please specify that donations are for Heart-to-Heart for Families. For further donation information contact Lisa Lund at 509-843-6084 or Sandi Dixon at 509-843-6043.

Because of the complexity of the fire, a Type I Incident Management Team has taken over management of the fire. The fire was initially reported to the Pendleton Interagency Communications Center late Friday afternoon and is burning on private lands protected by the Washington Department of Natural Resources and the Umatilla National Forest lands.

Emergency closures in effect include:

Forest Road 47 (Tucannon River Road)
Forest Road 4625 (Maloney Mountain Road)
Mountain Road at Lynville Road
Pataha Creek at Columbia Junction
Forest Road 41 east of 4206
Misery Springs

Wooten Game Range Head Quarters
Forest Road 46 and 4610 Junction
Maloney Mountain Road and Skyline Road
North Patit Road and Hartsock Road
Forest Road 42 at Forest Boundary