

Brown: Fire threatens water, power systems

By ZANE SPARLING
Capital Bureau

TROUTDALE — Gov. Kate Brown said the Columbia River Gorge has already suffered a “devastating impact” from the Eagle Creek wildfire — and the blaze is still zero percent contained as of Tuesday evening.

“We’re very concerned, obviously, about the Bonneville power grid and the Bull Run watershed being at risk,” Brown told reporters Tuesday. “(The Gorge) is a special place for many of us, and we’re very concerned about the impact.”

The fire, reportedly caused by a teen setting off fireworks, has jumped roughly 13 miles in 16 hours, Brown said, and about 400 homes have been evacuated in rural Multnomah County. No structures have been destroyed.

Also in east Multnomah County, another 850 homeowners have been warned there is a medium-level chance of an evacuation order, while roughly 4,000 homes in eastern Troutdale are at the lowest level of emergency readiness.

Troutdale Mayor Casey Ryan, who has been briefed on fire conditions, said the chance of a larger evacuation order remains “slim.”

“The wind is supposed to pick up tonight. It’s an east wind, which is unusual for this time of year,” he said in an interview. “If that happens, and it’s a lot, it could affect us.”

Brown has already signed an emergency conflagration act that allows authorities to tap state, interstate, federal and local resources to fight the flames and protect private property.

Brown said the Eagle Creek Fire has spread to more than 10,000 acres, compared with 170,000 acres for the Chetco Bar wildfire in southern Oregon. There are more than 1,400 emergency responders battling the Chetco fire.

Lt. Damon Simmons, a spokesman for the Portland Fire Bureau, said firefighters saved 58 structures in the Dodson and Warrendale area during the ongoing battle.

“It was really a gutsy effort,” he explained. “They had to work to make that fire move around those structures — rather than burning through them. It was house by house, structure by structure.”

Though the cause of the Eagle Creek fire is still under investigation, a news release



Josh Kulla/Pamplin Media Group
Oregon Gov. Kate Brown addresses reporters during a press conference about the Eagle Creek fire, in the Columbia Gorge, in Troutdale on Tuesday.

alleges that a 15-year-old boy from Vancouver, Washington, and several others may be responsible. They were seen playing in the woods with fireworks, according to various media reports.

“I would expect that they be held fully accountable for what has happened,” Brown said when pressed by reporters.

The Union Pacific rail line traveling through the Columbia River Gorge has been closed, as has Interstate 84 between Troutdale and Hood River.

Sgt. Bryan White, a Multnomah County Sheriff’s Office information officer, asked the public to please stay away from affected areas.

“They’re curious. They’re taking pictures. They’re taking videos. I cannot emphasize enough how dangerous that is,” he said.

Brown announced at the press conference that she had called up an additional 250 National Guard troops, for a total of more than 600. Those men and women are serving in support capacity during cleanup efforts, not as first-line firefighters.

Zane Sparling is a reporter for Pamplin Media Group’s Gresham Outlook.

State pegs wildfire costs at \$21.9 million and rising

By CLAIRE
WITHYCOMBE
Capital Bureau

SALEM — As wildfire season continues across Oregon, the state’s forestry department had spent \$21.9 million on firefighting costs as of the end of August, a department official said Tuesday.

With the Eagle Creek fire accelerating on the Columbia River Gorge, and other fires continuing across the state from Brookings to Sisters, firefighting costs are poised to grow higher.

Property owners with land classified as forest pay a state assessment to help cover firefighting costs in addition to money the Legislature appro-

riates from the general fund. The state has also purchased an insurance policy most years since 1973 to help cover firefighting costs.

But before it can tap that coverage, the state has to spend \$50 million of its own money, according to Ken Armstrong, public affairs director at the Oregon Department of Forestry.

Although wildfires are a reality of summer for many of Ore-

gon’s rural communities, cities in the Willamette Valley also felt the effects of wildfires over the holiday weekend and on Tuesday in smoky air and ash.

The state’s forestry department not only fights fires on state-owned land but also on federal and private land.

“Especially right now, the way things are this fire season, we pretty much have people on just about everything on the landscape,” Armstrong said.

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Nike to lay off 490 Oregon workers by end of September

Associated Press

PORTLAND — Nike officials say the company will lay off 490 Oregon workers by the end of the month.

The Oregonian reported the layoffs are part of the 2 percent of the workforce Nike plans to eliminate worldwide. In July, the Nike laid off 255 Oregon workers, and plans to cut another 490 local jobs by Sept. 30 for a total of 745 jobs lost in the state.

News of the layoffs comes months after Nike announced a broad restructuring of the footwear manufacturing company. Nike, near Beaverton, is the largest company headquartered in Oregon. It employs 74,000 people worldwide.

Collaboration

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Oncologist

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