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One dollar



Firefighters attempt to contain a fire burning in a residence on Northwest 13th Street after a grass fire burned into the neighborhood from a field near the Oxbow Trail on Monday in Hermiston.

HERMISTON

Wind-blown fire destroys duplex

Fireworks blamed for blaze that started in adjacent field

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

A fire that started in tall grass near the Oxbow Trail destroyed a duplex at Northwest 13th Street and West Ridgeway Avenue on Monday afternoon.

Firefighters from the Umatilla County Fire District 1 as well as Pendleton, Boardman, Umatilla and Echo fire departments spent several hours battling the flames and thick smoke, which billowed

over the entire neighborhood. Police had 35 residents evacuate their homes as a precaution.

The fire started a little after 1 p.m. and spread across about seven acres before reaching the duplex.

On their Facebook page, UCFD 1 said they were able to save five homes and 12 apartments from damage. They said 40 to 50 firefighters were involved in fighting the flames in already

See FIRE/9A

Escaped youth inmates still on the run

Sightings reported in Milton-Freewater, Meacham this weekend

La Grande Observer and East Oregonian

Two escapees from a state juvenile corrections facility in La Grande remain at large and now are suspects in new crimes. One was spotted in Meacham and Milton-Freewater over the weekend.

Brittain McAuliffe and Micah West, both 18, escaped the evening of June 20 from the Camp Riverbend Youth Transitional Facility, 58231 Highway 244, La Grande.

Oregon State Police thought the two might be in the old Blue Mountain Lounge building on the south edge of Meacham. OSP Sgt. Kyle Hove said law enforcement officers surrounded the building but found nobody inside.

OSP troopers knew somebody recently entered the building because its door was open after it had been closed when police had passed by earlier in the morning, Hove said.

OSP, with assistance from the Union County Sheriff's

See INMATES/9A



Fire crews in training practice digging a fire line around a controlled burn during wildland firefighter training Friday at the Northeast Oregon Fire School east of Meacham.

READY FOR MORE

Seasonal firefighters get hands-on training in the Blue Mountains

By GEORGE PLAVERN
East Oregonian

Marching single file with his firefighting crew along Summit Road in the Blue Mountains, Nick Boling could see a plume of white smoke rise above the pines.

Boling, 28, took note of the fire's behavior as they drew closer. White smoke likely meant the blaze was low intensity, creeping in grass and fallen branches as opposed to climbing the tops of trees. The wind was also calm, which would prevent the flames from spreading too quickly.

Of course, the fire was nothing more than a controlled burn, allowing first-time seasonal firefighters like Boling to get their feet wet — so to speak — on a live blaze. The crew worked in lockstep swinging their shovels and pulaskis to build a fire line, mimicking what to do when an actual wildfire sparks.

Readiness is key for wildland firefighters, and Friday marked the last day of North-



A fire crew embarks for a training exercise to a controlled burn Friday at the Northeast Oregon Fire School east of Meacham.

east Oregon Fire School where about 100 trainees from multiple agencies got some much-needed practice in the Umatilla National Forest between Pendleton and La Grande. The timing was nearly perfect, as

Monday would usher in the beginning of fire season for more than 2 million acres of forestland within the Oregon Department of Forestry's Northeast Oregon District.

Along with ODF, fire school brought together

trainees from the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Indian Affairs. Students spent much of their week in the classroom at Eastern Oregon University, learning about how fires react to changes

"I wouldn't say we like the stress and chaos of it all, but we definitely thrive in it."

— Nick Boling, firefighter trainee at Northeast Oregon Fire School

in conditions and how crews are organized, before honing their skills on one of 10 controlled burns ignited by drip torches.

Joel McCraw, who works for the Forest Service in Baker City and helps to coordinate fire school, said Friday was like the final exam for rookies to earn their red cards and become certified wildland firefighters.

"This is the final part of the course for them to get their certificate," McCraw said.

Boling, a native of Columbus, Ohio, is gearing up for fire season as a

See TRAINEES/9A

