

FIRE: Smoke may linger for a week

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was reported seven miles southeast of Elgin on private forestland.

Jamie Knight, spokeswoman with the Oregon Department of Forestry, said the Indian Lake fire is 65 percent contained and burning on a mix of lands protected by ODF, the Forest Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs. It is not certain whether any structures were damaged, Knight said Monday afternoon. No closures have been issued for the area.

The Clarks Creek fire, meanwhile, is now 80 percent contained. Crews on both fires are working to strengthen lines and mop up hot spots, Knight said.

"All in all, things are looking pretty good," she said.

Smoky skies, however, may linger for another week, affecting local air quality. The National Weather Service in Pendleton has issued another air quality alert through noon Saturday for Umatilla, Morrow, Grant, Union, Wallowa, Wheeler, Gilliam and Sherman counties.

Meteorologist Mike Murphy said a low pressure system is expected to move into the area Saturday, bringing winds out of the west which will help to clear out the haze. Thunderstorms and lightning may also be in the forecast, which would likely mean more fires given how hot and dry the forests have been.

Matt Howard, unit forester for ODF in Wallowa, said the formula they use to determine how ripe conditions are for burning — known as the energy release component — is at extreme levels around the Northeast Oregon District, thanks to months of below-average precipitation and record heat.

"We have transitioned quickly, and we are now in a critical period in our summer for fire danger," Howard said.

Coming off a wet winter with above-average snowpack, Howard said grasses were growing taller and thicker than in previous years heading into spring. Now, those same grasses are dry, cured and ready to burn.

With lightning potentially on the horizon, Howard urged people to take care when recreating in the forest to avoid causing more unnecessary human fires and straining



The Bear Butte Fire burns Friday near Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

Photo contributed by InciWeb

ODF identifies firefighter injured in crash

The Oregon Department of Forestry has identified the seasonal firefighter injured Saturday in a vehicle wreck on Interstate 84 west of Meacham.

Jesse Boyd, 21, of Heppner, was heading back from the Indian Lake fire operating a 1,600-gallon water tender when the truck left the roadway, crossed the median and came to rest in the eastbound lanes of the interstate. Why he crashed remains under investigation.

Boyd was flown via air ambulance to a local hospital where he is being treated for serious injuries. His condition is listed as stable, according to ODF.

firefighting resources.

"We really don't want to be messing with human-caused fire when we've got lightning like that coming in," he said.

Out of 74 total fires reported this year by the Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch Center, 30 have been human-caused, burning 1,298 acres.

"They're taking quite a few resources to gain the upper hand on some of these incidents," Howard said.

The ODF Northeast Oregon District is in a regulated use closure, prohibiting all open fires except at designated locations. Property owners also cannot use a chainsaw, weld metal or mow dried grass with power-driven equipment between the hours of 10 a.m.

and 8 p.m. Off-road vehicle travel is not allowed, and smoking is prohibited in the woods except in vehicles, boats or cleared areas.

Similar restrictions are also in place on the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur national forests under Phase B public use restrictions. Howard said it is the public's responsibility to know what restrictions are in place within each jurisdiction before heading out.

A complete list of restrictions can be found online at www.bmidc.org, or by calling the Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch Center in La Grande at 541-963-7171

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.



Hermiston Mayor Dave Drotzmann walks around one of the livestock barns at the Umatilla County Fair on Monday in Hermiston.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

FAIR: EOTEC situated on 56 acres compared to 17.5 at old fairgrounds

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breeding stock, said she's been showing at the fair for 13 years.

"It looks a lot more like the bigger shows I've been to," said the Hermiston High School graduate, who's studying agricultural business and animal science at Oregon State University. Betz will show a junior heifer on Wednesday in the cross-breeding portion of the fair. She has always shown beef, but started out with steers and slowly added breeding stock to her repertoire.

There's more room at EOTEC, too, with 56 acres compared to 17.5 at the old fairgrounds and 81,060 square feet of barn space compared to 26,187 square feet at the old fairgrounds.

A group of students from Echo School's Future Farmers of America chapter said they were looking forward to some of the amenities.

"I'm really excited about the shower situation," said Laci Wiggins, who recently graduated from Echo School and is showing two breeding goats and a market hog. "And the pens are a lot



Umatilla County Fair Board member Dan Dorrان, right, waits as guests load up on his golf cart as he guides a tour Monday of the new Umatilla County Fair Grounds at EOTEC on Monday in Hermiston.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

"The old one was outdated. And here, the beef, goats and sheep are all under one roof."

— Brooke VanderVeen, Echo school teacher

nicer." Her teacher, Brooke VanderVeen, said the biggest difference between this facility and the previous one was the layout.

"The old one was outdated," she said. "And here, the beef, goats and sheep are all under one roof." The fair begins Tuesday

at 9 a.m. Tickets are \$10 for general admission, and parking is \$5. The money from parking will go toward covering fair costs, Smith said.

Contact Jayati Ramakrishnan at 541-564-4534 or jramakrishnan@eastoregonian.com.

WATER:

Everyone needs to pitch in to conserve water

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city parks except Roy Raley, which needs some extra help to get back to where it should be. Water also is on for the new trees and young arbovitae along Frazer Avenue around Southwest Ninth Street.

"Some of them are just newly planted and need a lot of water to survive, especially this time of year," he said.

Water also remains on at city hall and the convention center, but Cook said he would turn that off if the shortage demands because drinking water matters more than green grass.

Water at the parks should be off for a few days. Cook said if the repairs take longer and grass starts to turn brown, the department might water on a rotation.

The city in a written statement urged residents to "minimize all outside watering as much as possible." Patterson said with two wells down, everyone needs to pitch in to conserve water.

Cook said on the upside, folks might not need to mow as much.

The city last asked its residents to cut back on watering in 2002, according to the city's written statement about the wells. The public's help made the difference then, the city stated, and should be able to address this water shortage as well.

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