

# FIRE

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Columns of smoke could still be seen rising over the blaze Sunday, which scorched roughly 500 acres of grass and timber along Interstate 84 up Emigrant Hill. The total number of acres burned had been estimated as high as 800, but that figure changed based on more accurate mapping, Knight said.

The fire was 25 percent contained as of Sunday evening. Evacuation warnings for the nearby town of Meacham also had been lifted entirely.

"The winds didn't come up like they did (Saturday)," Knight said. "That really helped a lot."

The fire started at about 12:30 p.m. Saturday, with residents and Emigrant Springs State Park evacuated later that evening. More than a dozen people wound up at the Oregon Trail Store & Deli in Meacham where they planned what to do next.

"We're kind of at the center of town," said store owner Dixie Earle. "We had people load up here and regroup, and figure out where they were going."

Earle said the store's phone lines were knocked out earlier in the day, and a nearly two-hour power failure in Union County may have also been attributed to the fire damaging power lines. Though the fire never came too close to Meacham, Earle said they could see plenty of smoke hovering in the dis-



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Spot fires smolder in the distance as traffic travels on Interstate 84 on Sunday near Deadman Pass east of Pendleton.

tance. A temporary shelter for residents was established up at Sunridge Middle School in Pendleton, though Rebecca Vaughn with the American Red Cross said nobody had arrived by Sunday morning. That likely means those families found assistance elsewhere, Vaughn said, though the shelter will remain available until evacuation orders are lifted.

"We're ready to stand down when we get the word," Vaughn said.

The Blue Mountain Type 3 Interagency Incident Management Team took command of the fire Sunday morning, and will continue to work strengthening fire lines. There are approximately 285 firefighters on scene, with fire



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A road sign is damaged on Interstate 84 after a burning felled tree appears to have hit it while firefighters were battling a wildfire east of Pendleton.

camp established on private property at Poverty Flats.

As many as nine single-engine air tankers, one heavy air tanker, two helicopters, one air attack and one lead plane

have been called in to provide air support, along with three bulldozers and more than a dozen fire engines on the ground.

Plumes of smoke from



Photo contributed by John Buckman, ODF

Fire crews respond to a 500-acre blaze in the Blue Mountains east of Pendleton on Saturday.

several wildfires also were visible in Grant County over the weekend. Two fires near Unity were reported Sunday:

### Rail Fire

The Rail Fire, which started Sunday about 10 miles west-southwest of Unity, was at about 700 acres as of Monday morning, according to Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Public Affairs Specialist Matt Burks. The fire is about 2 miles long and a half-mile wide, burning in lodgepole pine, he said.

Four engines, two hand crews and a bulldozer are on scene, Burks said, and additional resources were en route. Air resources are also resuming initial attack operations.

Burks said firefighters are focusing on constructing line on the north and east sides of the fire. The nearby South Fork, Stevens Creek, Elk Creek and Mammoth Springs campgrounds have been closed. The nearest private

land is 2 miles east of the fire. Burks said the cause of the fire is unknown.

According to the Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch Center morning briefing, residences are threatened, evacuations are in effect and "extreme fire behavior with crowning and group torching" was witnessed. A type 2 incident management team was tentatively scheduled to assume command of the fire.

### Whitney Fire

About 11 miles north-northwest of Unity, crews are battling the Whitney Fire, which was also reported Sunday, according to the Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch Center morning briefing. The fire was about 15 acres as of Monday morning, Burks said, and crews have constructed lines around the entire fire.

Five engines, two hand crews and a bulldozer are working to improve the fire line and containing the fire, he said.

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