



IDAHO MOUNTAIN



Express

AND GUIDE

Castle Rock Fire continues rapid growth

Three BLM smokejumpers from Boise were first on the scene

By JASON KAUFFMAN
Express Staff Writer

Boise-based smokejumpers Dale Springer, Ben Oakleaf and a third unnamed jumper were roughly 3,000 feet above the ground Thursday evening at 5:51 p.m. when they jumped from their Twin Otter turboprop airplane into warm summertime air above Warm Springs Creek.

Descending through the air, the trio could easily see the haze of smoke from a small wildfire near the intersection of Castle Gulch and Barr Gulch on the south side of the Warm Springs Creek Road near Castle Rock. Varying reports have placed the Castle Rock Fire at between a half-acre and five acres when initial contact with it was made Thursday.

Touching down about 10 miles west of Ketchum, Springer led his team of smokejumpers to the perimeter of the small wildfire.

The smokejumpers quickly found the lone lightning-struck tree where the fire began, Springer told Idaho Mountain Express photographer Willy Cook several days later on Sunday. He made his remarks next to what was then the incident command post adjacent to Castle Rock.

Springer said the situation looked promising when they first arrived on scene.

"I thought we could get it," he said.

That optimism quickly turned to concern, though, as high winds began to whip up the flames. Soon after, the blaze made contact with a large stand of north-facing timber on the south side of the Warm Springs Creek Road and took off, Springer recalled.

"It was a half-acre fire and it ran away. It got in the timber and there was not much we could do," he said.

Both the steepness of the terrain, the "turbulent" winds

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Express photo by Willy Cook
Flames consume a stand of Douglas fir west of Ketchum Saturday.

"I thought we could get it."

Dale Springer
Boise BLM smokejumper

Castle Rock Fire— Essential information

Here is the latest information released Monday by
Blaine County and other local authorities

Fire Status

The 10,700-acre Castle Rock fire is 6 percent contained and is being fought by more than 550 firefighters. Critically dry fuels, steep terrain, fire spotting, torching, winds and rapidly changing weather reconditions have hampered fire fighting efforts. The focus today is to build fire line along state Highway 75. The protection of human life and structures are the highest priorities.

Mandatory Evacuations

- The mandatory evacuation of Warm Springs Road west of Gates Road has been ordered by Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter at the request of the Blaine County Commission.
- Warm Springs Road west of Gates is closed to all traffic on the Lower Board Ranch.

Voluntary Evacuations

- Residents from Gates Road to Short Swing Lane on the north side of Warm Springs Road have been put on notice to be prepared.
- The west side of Highway 75 from the north Ketchum city limit to mile marker 134 is under a voluntary evacuation order (Fox Creek).

Road Closures

- Warm Springs Road west of Gates Road—all traffic.
- Bridge at Hulen Meadows—local traffic only.
- Adams Gulch Road—local traffic only.

Land Closures

- Public lands, federal roads and trails west of state Highway 75 from Deer Creek Road north of Hailey to Baker Creek Road north of Ketchum are closed until further notice. Bald Mountain is closed to all traffic and recreation.

Community Meeting

- A community meeting regarding the Castle Rock Fire will be held in the gym at Hemingway Elementary School in Ketchum tonight, Monday, Aug. 20, at 6:30 p.m.

Important Contact Information

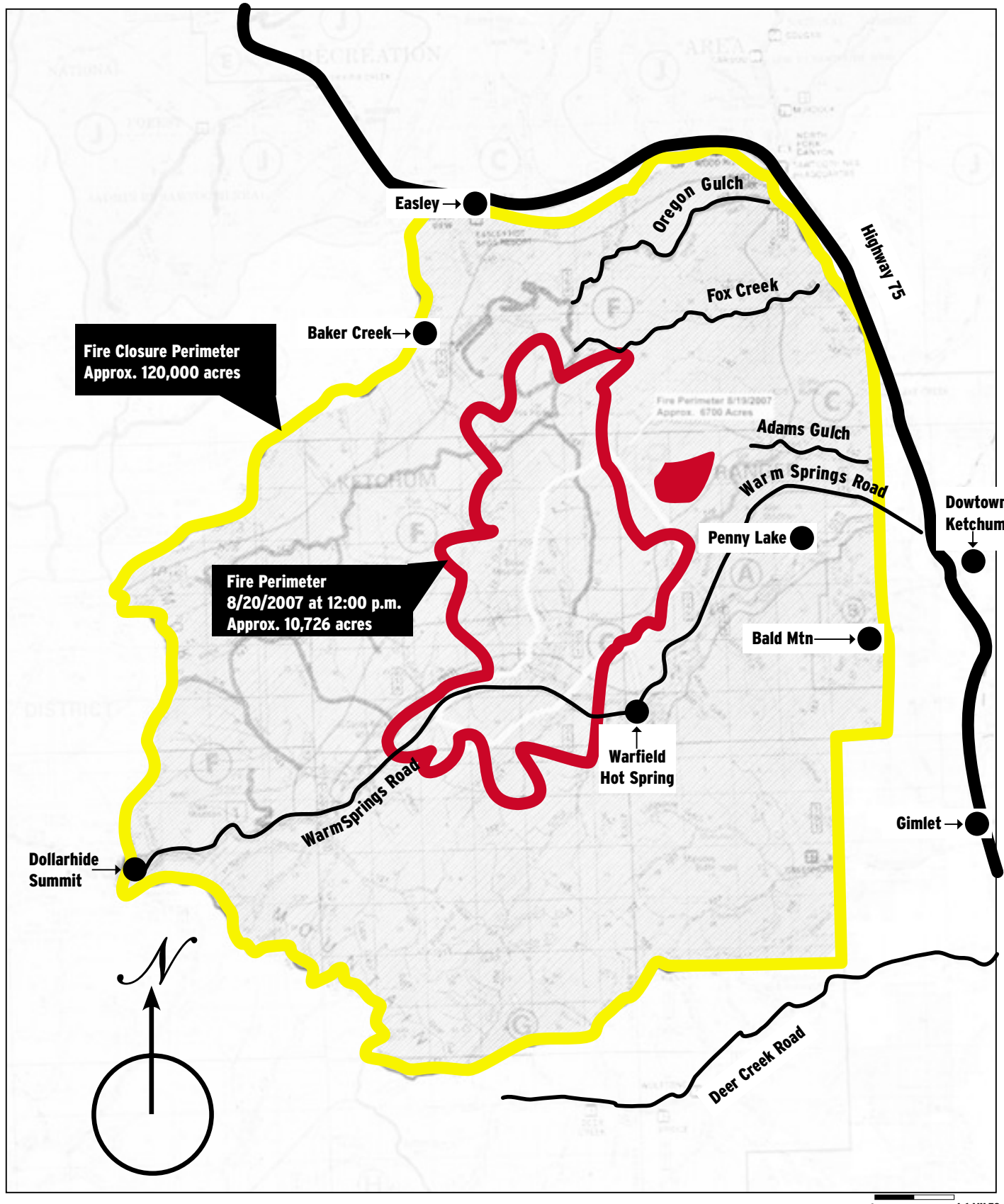
A joint information center (JIC) is being established by the Type 1 Incident Management Team. Phone numbers will be published immediately when available.

Current information is available:

- On the Web at www.blainecounty.org—for updates.
- On the Web at www.mtxpress.com.
- On the Web at www.inciweb.org.
- Forest Service (Ketchum Ranger District)—(208) 622-5371.
- General Information—(208) 726-7811.
- Please be patient: The city is adding additional phone lines to accommodate our community.

Weather forecast

The National Weather Service is calling for mostly cloudy skies with a chance of scattered rain showers tonight. Breezy conditions. Lows 44 to 54. On Tuesday, the forecast is for mostly sunny skies with temperatures ranging from 67 to 77. Light winds, less than 10 miles per hour.



Adaptation of map from Geo Mac, Wildland Fire Support
<http://geomac.usgs.gov>

Castle Rock Fire only 6 percent contained

Continued from front

and the extremely dry condition of forest fuels in the area contributed to the fire's quick eruption, Springer said.

"The fuels here have been extremely receptive," he explained.

Since fire crews began to work the blaze initially on Thursday, the fire has continued to grow by exponential leaps and bounds.

From just three to five acres on Thursday, the Castle Rock Fire grew to about 25 acres on Friday morning, the Sawtooth National Forest's north zone fire management officer Bill Murphy said Monday. By Friday evening, the blaze still remained on the south side of Warm Springs Creek, but had grown to about 150 acres.

On Saturday morning, the Castle Rock Fire had grown to between 500 and 600 acres, Murphy said. Sometime between noon and 3 p.m., the blaze jumped over the Warm Springs Creek Road and began running up the Rooks Creek drainage toward Fox Peak. The blaze also ran over but apparently did not damage several cabins in the Frenchman's Bend area.

Throughout Saturday, the blaze made a significant run up Rooks Creek and by the end of the day was reportedly in the 3,200-acre range, Murphy said.

By mid-day Sunday, the fast-moving blaze had apparently continued its rapid growth and was somewhere in the neighborhood of 6,000 to 7,000 acres, he said.

And the fire's remarkable growth didn't quit there, either.

At a briefing for firefighters at the Sun Valley Resort's River Run Lodge Monday morning, fire managers said the large blaze had grown to 10,726 acres, and was still threatening three neighborhoods north and northwest of Ketchum.

The more accurate acreage count was generated from the air after nightfall Sunday evening using infrared imaging.

A combination of critically dry fuels and gusting winds reportedly sent burning embers up to a mile ahead of the main fire front on Sunday and ignited a large spot fire in the Fox Creek drainage, officials said Monday morning. Another separate spot fire is also "well established" in the upper reaches of Adams Gulch, fire officials said.

Despite the volatile nature of the blaze, no structures in the most threatened areas out Warm Springs Creek have been lost so far, officials further reported.

At 4 p.m. Sunday, a mandatory evacuation order was issued for all of Warm Springs Road west of the Ketchum city limits. The order, issued with the authority of the governor's office, does not per-

tain to areas inside the city limits.

At the same time, the city of Ketchum issued notice that residents of Gates Road near Warm Springs Village and to the east on Warm Springs Road to Short Swing Lane should be prepared to evacuate. Warm Springs Road west of the first bridge has been closed to all but local traffic. The voluntary evacuation has also been enlarged to include the west side of state Highway 75 from the northern Ketchum city limits to mile marker 134 at Fox Creek.

During the Monday morning briefing at the River Run Lodge, Rob Balfour, part of the Type 1 incident management team from Southern California sent to manage the fire, said windy conditions will continue to hamper fire suppression efforts, although they shouldn't be quite as heavy today, Monday, as they were on Sunday.

"We will have strong winds for most of the week," Balfour said.

In terms of good news, Balfour said the weather forecast is calling for a slight chance of light rain tonight, Monday. He said humidity levels should also be higher.

The fire is at 6 percent containment, officials said Monday morning.

For the latest information, visit www.mtexpress.com.

Castle Rock Fire Information Updates

Idaho Mountain Express reporters are posting stories online as they happen on the valley's news site. Emergency information and numbers may also be found here. Check in often for the latest news on neighborhood situations, fire spread, fire fighting efforts and emergency information.

Get the news through either of these web addresses:

www.mtexpress.com

www.sunvalleycentral.com then click on the Express logo at the top of the page

Official fire phone numbers and official information:

Local U.S. Forest Service Fire Information line: 622-5371

Blaine County fire information: blainecounty.org

National wildland fire information online: www.inciweb.org

Ketchum City Hall, 480, East Ave. No.

American Red Cross Evacuation Center Info, 208-243-0517

American Red Cross Evacuation Center at Community Campus, Fox Acres Road, Hailey

AND Post your own fire stories!!

www.mtexpress.com

Find the link under Castle Rock Fire News and Information

Let the community know what you are experiencing and what you see