

Excerpts from Incident Command Narrative on Lolo Peak Fire, 8/27/2017-9/09/2017

Date	These notes focus mainly on weather, fire behavior, and safety issues. Additional information is available online (https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/5375/).
27-Aug	<p>Public meeting will be held tonight in Florence. There are no evacuation orders at this time, but some areas remain under evacuation warnings, and evacuation orders could be issued based on fire behavior. Highway 12 is open with a 45 mph speed limit. Yesterday's weather allowed firefighters to conduct a large burnout to prevent the fire from moving further north. On the southeast side of the fire, a low-intensity burnout operation created highly visible smoke. Like links in a chain, burnouts are connecting with control lines and old burned areas to prevent further fire spread. Burnouts also provide safety zones for firefighters. Today, there will be more smoke on south edge of the fire as crews mop up from burnouts. Hot, dry weather continues to dry out the fuels. Thunderstorms with gusty winds are predicted in the next few days. Some torching and crowning will occur in the fire's interior, especially in the hotter afternoon hours.</p>
28-Aug	<p>Highway 12 is open with a 45 mph speed limit. Burnout operations and mop-up continued. Firefighters helped suppress a new fire start. Weather continued hot and dry, so burnouts on the southeast side of the fire could not start until evening. Firing operations through the night backed the fire slowly downhill until it reached control lines. Helicopters dropped water along ridge lines to keep the fire from heading south into dense forest. Today's forecast is for very hot, dry conditions and turbulent winds, so there is high potential for large fire growth. Some torching and crowning will continue in the fire's interior. Along the southern edge of the fire, hand line has been used to connect the primary control line to a scar from a 2009 fire. To date, firefighters have assessed more than 1000 structures for fire risk and ways to reduce risk. Evacuation warnings are in place for some areas.</p>
29-Aug	<p>Cloud cover today will moderate fire activity until dry thunderstorms move into the area this afternoon, bringing the possibility of strong winds and new fire starts. Yesterday, for the second day in a row, firefighters and helicopters had to leave normal operations to attack new fires. Fire activity increased along the west edge of the fire. Along the southern edge, fire crossed a retardant line and moved downslope. Crews used hose lays and sprinkler systems to reinforce hand line, while helicopters dropped water to stall the fire. Plans for burnout were canceled because of heightened danger of rapid fire spread. The purpose of burnouts is to remove fuels and create large buffers along control lines. Firefighters will monitor the fire's movement and begin burnout operations if necessary to prevent spread to the east. If burnout begins, it will be supported by crews, aircraft, engines, and water delivery equipment already in place. Structure protection engines will also be on standby to suppress spot fires, especially in developed areas. Evacuation warnings are in place for some areas.</p>

30-Aug	<p>Red Flag warning is in place this afternoon through tomorrow. Morning cloud cover should keep fire activity moderated until dry thunderstorms move in this afternoon, possibly bringing winds gusting up to 45 mph, lightning, and new fire starts.</p> <p>Yesterday, cloud cover and smoke kept fire activity moderate. The fire continued to be most active along its southern edge. Retardant and water drops have kept it in check for a week, but it is now backing down a steep valley. Crews used hose lays and sprinkler systems to reinforce lines, and helicopters continued to drop water on the fire. Mop-up continues along the northwest side of the fire. Firefighters are pulling equipment from this area to be used either on other areas of this fire or on neighboring fires. There are currently no evacuations in place, so the 150 Montana National Guard personnel that were protecting evacuated property have been released. Today, firefighters will prepare areas for small burnouts to provide wide, continuous buffers between the fire and developed areas. Evacuation warnings are in place for some areas.</p>
31-Aug	<p>Red flag warning is in place today through 9 pm. Thunderstorms are expected, with potential for gusty, erratic winds up to 40 mph. Hot, dry weather is predicted to continue with high temperatures even on ridge tops. Today, operations were suspended when afternoon winds increased safety concerns south and east of the fire. The fire continued to back southwards, crossed a deep valley, and is now moving up the opposite slope. Firefighters prepared some areas for small burnouts to widen buffers along the south and eastern edges of the fire. Mop-up continued along the northwest edge of the fire, which continues to smolder through some unburned pockets of fuel. Personnel began to repair areas damaged during suppression of the fire along the Highway 12 corridor. Today's operations will be limited while the predicted strong, gusty winds continue. The public may see isolated tree torching from deep inside the fire as the wind kicks up flames and the fire continues to consume unburned pockets of fuel. Evacuation warnings are in place for some areas.</p>
1-Sep	<p>After the thunderstorms pass today, persistent hot and dry weather is expected to return. Smoke and fire have been visible throughout the fire area as it burned pockets of timber that were previously unburned. Helicopters dropped water to check fire spread to the south, although slow uphill spread continued. As the winds died down and humidity increased in the evening, the fire became less active. Firefighters took this opportunity to burn out small areas and connect them with other burned blocks and control lines. Work has begun to repair areas damaged during suppression of the fire along the Highway 12 corridor. Fire is expected to be less active today, but isolated tree torching may occur inside the fire perimeter. Evacuation warnings are in place for some areas.</p>

2-Sep	<p>A fire weather watch has been issued through tomorrow. High temperatures, low humidity and gusty winds are expected. Throughout the day, helicopters dropped retardant to give firefighters time to reinforce previously burned-out buffer areas. Helicopters dropped small fire-starting spheres to burn out fuels along the southern edge of the fire. Mop-up , patrolling, and monitoring continue along the northern and eastern edges of the fire. Work has begun to repair areas damaged during suppression on the northwest side of the fire. In anticipation of increased traffic and numbers of visitors over the Labor Day weekend, 54 members of the National Guard arrived in the afternoon to help provide security and enforce roadblocks. Today, the fire is expected to be less active. Burnouts may be used if conditions allow. Evacuation warnings are in place for some areas.</p>
3-Sep	<p>Red Flag Warning is in place until 9:00 pm today. High temperatures, low humidity and gusty winds are expected. Today, firefighters responded along with aircraft and engines to a spot fire on the western edge of the fire. Firefighters continued to reinforce strategically burned-out buffer areas with support from helicopters. Smoke and fire were visible throughout the area due to increased fire activity in the central, southern, and northwestern portions of the fire. Patrolling, monitoring, and mop-up efforts continue on the north, northwest and northeast sides of the fire. Fire progression is being actively monitored on the southwestern edge. Work is continuing to repair areas damaged during earlier phases of fire control efforts. Members of the National Guard continue to help provide security. Today, fire is expected to be active along the southern edge. Nearby fires in northern Idaho and western Montana will also experience increased activity, bringing more smoke into the area. Evacuation warnings are in place for some areas.</p>
4-Sep	<p>A Red Flag Warning is in effect until 9:00 am today for high temperatures, low humidity and gusty winds. An Evacuation Order is in effect for areas along the southern and eastern edges of the fire. Evacuations are ordered to provide for the safety of citizens due to the forecasted Red Flag conditions. The fire was very active overnight as cold air pooled in the valleys and warm air blanketed the mid-slopes. Torching on the western edge of the fire caused spot fires that grew into a 300 acre fire outside of the primary containment line. The new burn area could move toward Highway 12. Firefighters and helicopter-dropped retardant checked fire spread on ridges near the southern edge of the fire. Burnout operations are planned to provide a continuous buffer along the southeast side of the fire. Repair work continues to in areas damaged during earlier phases of fire control efforts. Members of the National Guard are present to help provide security. Today, crews will focus the southeastern areas of the burn. Shifting winds are expected throughout the day, and active fire spread is expected in areas that have not been exposed to wind recently. Evacuation warnings are in place for some areas.</p>

5-Sep	<p>A community meeting is planned for tonight in Stevensville. Winds are expected to subside today, and valley air is expected to stay stable for the next 2 days or so. All evacuation orders have been lifted. Smoke obscured visibility today, so air operations could not be used. However, satellite imagery was used to locate hot spots along the western and southern portions of the fire. Burnouts were completed along the southern edge of the fire. Since air support was not available, firefighters used trucks to spray retardant directly on the ground in preparation for future burnouts. Suppression repair work continues on the north side of the fire. Members of the National Guard are present to help provide security. Today, air support will be limited or unavailable because of limited visibility. Light up-slope winds are predicted. This will help firefighters complete small burnouts. Evacuation warnings are in place for some areas.</p>
6-Sep	<p>Sunny and warm weather is predicted, with stable air in valley bottoms. Thunderstorms may move in later in the week, but measurable precipitation is not expected. There are currently no evacuation orders in place. Smoke has reduced visibility and hampered air operations over most of the fire. However, a helicopter was able drop retardant on the west side of the fire where it had spotted over the primary containment line. This helped firefighters hold that flank of the fire. Overnight, crews completed a 120-acre burnout near the southern edge of the fire. Suppression repair work continues on the north side of the fire. Structure assessments are complete in all areas. Along the southern edge of the fire, crews are constructing fireline. If conditions permit, further burnouts will begin. Suppression repair work and structure assessments will continue elsewhere around the fire. Evacuation warnings are in place for some areas.</p>
7-Sep	<p>A stagnant weather pattern is forecast for the next two days. Strong westerly winds may arrive in 2-3 days. No evacuation orders are currently in place. The low visibility due to smoke halted air operations yesterday and likely will do so again today. Heavy equipment and ground crews mopped up after a 120-acre burnout near the southern edge of the fire and reduced fire spread inside the fire boundary on the northwestern edge. Suppression repair work continued on the north side of the fire. Structure assessments are complete. Further burnouts are planned for today, and crews are finishing a line south of the fire to tie into a 2009 burn. Dozer line, sprinkler setup, and mop-up will continue. Suppression repair work will continue. Evacuation warnings are in place for some areas.</p>
8-Sep	<p>We have had little wind recently, which is likely to change this afternoon. Strong westerly winds are expected today and tomorrow. There have been pockets of fire activity throughout the fire area. Yesterday, firefighters contained two spot fires along the western edge of the fire. Burnout operations last night and today continue, in order to make the burned area wide enough to prevent spotting outside the perimeter as winds increase. A fire lookout tower was wrapped to protect it in case the fire reaches it. Evacuation warnings are in place for some areas.</p>

9-Sep	<p>Red flag warning is in place for this afternoon and evening. Strong westerly winds are predicted for today and tomorrow, with gusts up to 30 mph. Crews and equipment worked to maintain the perimeter on the west side of the fire. Suppression repair work continued along the north and northeast sides of the fire, including 12.5 miles of road and 2.5 miles of dozer line. Smoke kept visibility low in the valley. Firefighters began burnouts on the southern edge of the fire to connect control lines with previously burned areas. Fire crews and heavy equipment are working today to isolate the active burning on the west and southwest sides of the fire. Along the Highway 12 corridor, suppression repair will continue. Burnouts continue to complete a buffer zone ahead of this afternoon's predicted high winds. Evacuation warnings are in place for some areas.</p>
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