

Washington Fire 45% contained; roads opening



More than 1,100 people are working to suppress the lightning-caused Washington Fire near Markleeville. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Updated 8:15pm:

Firefighters are getting a handle on the Washington Fire burning near Markleeville. It is 45 percent contained, with 17,786 acres burned.

Highway 4 through Markleeville, south over Ebbetts Pass, is open to through traffic. Highway 89 starting at the junction with Highway 4 and continuing over Monitor Pass remains closed, as does Wolf Creek Road

Hotshot crews on the eastern fire edge are constructing a direct hand line in steep and rocky terrain while being

supported by helicopters.

The lightning-caused fire started June 19. It is still three miles from Markleeville in Alpine County.

Updated 12:50pm:

U.S. Forest Service crews are working to extinguish nine small fires resulting from last night's lightning strikes in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Most of the fires are single-tree fires with some ground fire, and the largest is only a half-acre in size.

The Forest Service is staffing all nine fires with the assistance of Tahoe-Douglas and North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection Districts. The fires are scattered between Kings Beach and Cave Rock in hike-in only terrain. A helicopter is assisting with reconnaissance and water drops as needed.

Updated 11:50am:

East Fork Fire Protection District reports that all six fires that were reported June 27 are at 1 acre or less in size and, have been extinguished or have crews on scene mopping up the fires. The crews have orders for full extinguishment.

Concerns are the potential for new fires starts due to the multiple lighting strikes that occurred during Saturday's storm that pushed through the valley. This concern is going to continue through the week.

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While today's afternoon thunderstorms are expected to bring more rain than Saturday's, fire personnel are worried about flash floods in the Washington Fire area that could make roads slick and dangerous, as well as bring debris down from charred slopes.

The 9-day-old fire is 37 percent contained, with 17,697 acres burned near Markleeville.

Keeping the fire from reaching the town is still the goal of firefighters. On Saturday the precautionary evacuation order was lifted for this Alpine County town.

One structure has been lost, but no details have been released about it.

Road and campground closures still exist as nearly 1,200 people continue to battle the fire that is burning in a steep, remote area.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report