

Railroad Fire grows to 1,900 acres, burns property at Sugar Pine Railroad

By Mark Evan Smith

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The Railroad Fire continued to grow throughout the evening into Thursday morning, with an incident command base now established at Ahwahnee Hills Regional Park.

A community meeting has been planned for 7 p.m. at the Oakhurst Community Center, located at 39800 Road 425B. The South Central Interagency Incident Management Team will provide updates on the Railroad Fire during the meeting.

The fire was estimated at 1,901 acres, with 5% contained Thursday morning, an increase from 1,200 acres the previous evening, as 350 personnel remain assigned to the flames.

Throughout the night, fire officials said the blaze was active to its east, burning southeast of the Tenaya Lodge while crews worked to maintain the flames at Jackson Road. Some activity was also seen to its west, on the western side of Highway 41 in Fish Camp.

Seven structures, mostly north past the Narrow Gauge Inn, have been destroyed, officials said, with 100 still under threat.

Cedar Valley, they said, was not under immediate threat, nor was Ahwahnee or other areas to the fire's southwest. It started on Tuesday afternoon near Highway 41 and Mill Canyon Road in Fish Camp.

Highway 41 remains closed in the Cedar Valley area north of Oakhurst, with traffic to Yosemite still detoured along Highway 49. Mandatory evacuations of Fish Camp, Sugar Pine, and any surrounding camps or locations, such as Tenaya Lodge and Narrow Gauge Inn, remain in effect.

In Ahwahnee, the command post was worked on throughout the evening, with equipment such as beds and bathrooms still seen rolling in Thursday morning.

For Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine Railroad, some minor damage was reported. The main buildings, trains, and rail cars are still standing, officials said, though at least one older car had been destroyed.

High fire activity is again expected Thursday, they added, as rising temperatures and winds are expected to create difficult firefighting conditions. Air attack crews were being ordered by 8 a.m., but due to several other fires across the state and West Coast, it was unknown how many could arrive.

The cause of the fire is under investigation. Evacuation shelters are located at the Oakhurst Community Center, and Yosemite Valley Visitors Center.

Small animals can be accepted at the Mariposa SPCA building, while large animals are being taken at the Coarsegold Rodeo Grounds, similar to the Detwiler Fire in July. Tanner Tweed can be contacted there at (559) 994-2794.

Another shelter, courtesy of the Central California Disaster Team, will be available at the Oakhurst Community Center later in the day.

Smoke completely blanketed areas in Fish Camp near the fire, and was particularly strong in parts of Oakhurst and Ahwahnee Wednesday.

Those with sensitivity to smoky conditions are advised to consult with their physicians, and remain inside with the windows closed. Smoke is typically strongest in the mornings, officials said, and clears from the afternoon into the evening.

For more information on the Railroad Fire, visit <https://inciweb.nwccg.gov/incident/5553/> or call (559) 373-00404.

This story will be updated.