HISTORY

The Burnt Powder Fire Zone was formed in 1983 from Pine Ranger District in Halfway, Baker Ranger District in Baker City and the Unity Ranger District in Unity. The ranger districts were then combined in 2006 and renamed the Whitman Ranger District. The zone is responsible for protecting 700,000 acres of Forest Service land and another 300,000 acres of mutual aid land. The north end of the zone borders the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area and the Eagle Cap Wilderness. The southern end goes to the Monument Wilderness and borders the Malheur National Forest. The diverse terrain includes the Elkhorn Mountains to the Wallowa Mountains, with peaks above 9,000’. The zone gets an average of 50 fire starts a year. The zone also staffs 3 lookouts for fire detection from July-September.

FIRE SEASON

Fire season typically starts the beginning of July, peaks in mid-August and ends sometime early October. June is a busy month of preparedness training. The Burnt Powder Fire Zone averages around 50 initial attack fires with a few large fires (greater than 100 acres) per season. The Fire Zone helps support large fires in Region 6 (WA, OR) and nationally with our Forest 20-person Type 2 I.A. crew or engine modules. During fire season we could work up to 7 days a week and extended staffing up to 16 hrs. Fire assignments can last up to 14 days, not including travel. So be prepared to be gone for several weeks.

FIRE CREWS

The Burnt Powder Fire Zone on the Whitman Unit of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest is home to a variety of Initial Attack Modules staffing out of 3 different duty stations. On the southern end of our zone and boarding the Monument Rock Wilderness, in the town of Unity we staff a Type 6 Engine Module and a 5-person Initial Attack module. The compound in Unity has government housing available and consists primarily of fire personnel during the months of fire season. Our eastern most duty station, bordered by the Snake River and Eagle Cap Wilderness is the town of Halfway. Here we staff a Type 6 Engine Module along with a 10 Person Initial Attack Crew. The compound in Halfway also has government housing available and provides living and office accommodations for fire personnel as well as other employees year-round. The central hub of our zone is in Baker City where the Whitman District Office and Compound Work Center are located. At this location we staff a Type 3 Engine Module, a Type 6 Engine Module, and a 10 Person Initial Attack Crew. Zone
Fire Management Officers and Fuels Staff operate out of this location also. There is no government housing in Baker City. Across the zone our engine module configuration is: Supervisor Fire Engine Operator, Fire Engine Operator and Assistant Fire Engine Operator and 2 crew members for a total of 5 personnel. The 5-person squads consist of Supervisor, Squad Leader and 3 crew members. The 10-person I.A. crew configuration is Supervisor, Assistant, Squad Leader, Senior Firefighter and 6 crew members.

**DAILY OPERATIONS**

Fire crews begin the day with vehicle checks followed by zone operational briefing. Next is an hour of PT (physical training). Then it is off to the woods for project work. This may include forest stand improvement work; prescribed burn preparation, thinning small diameter trees with chainsaws to reduce hazardous fuels, timber sale and thinning layout. We also maintain the facilities at all three locations, which includes grounds and building maintenance. Our fire prevention program includes Smokey Bear visiting the schools in the spring and in a variety of parades during the summer.

**Contact**

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