



July Lightning Incident Daily Update July 18, 2026, 10:00 am

Inciweb: <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/mnsuf-july-2026-superior-nf-wildfires>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SuperiorNF> & <https://www.facebook.com/mnics.org>

Fire Information: 218-881-2091 (8:00 am–8:00 pm), 2026.JulyLightningEvent@firenet.gov

Canadian Fire Information: [Ontario Wildfire Information](#)

BWCAW Closures/Permittees: 218-235-4400 or 218-235-3113

Smoke Map: fire.airnow.gov

Media Inquiries: *New Number* 218-219-0233

Executive Summary

Today, the Southern Area Complex Incident Management Team has assumed command of 15 wildfires burning in the local counties and the Superior National Forest. As the smoke cleared yesterday, firefighters were able to conduct mapping of the fires after several days of dense smoke coverage. Combined acreage overall of the July Lightning Incident is just over 71,000 acres, with an additional 6,000 acres consumed by the Little Knife fire in the United States. The public is being asked to support firefighters and public safety by adhering to all evacuations, closures, and fire restrictions; by refraining from flying drones, which endanger firefighting aircraft; and by keeping boats off the water in areas where water-gathering aircraft are operating. Fires reported on this update may change as some fires have merged or been moved into patrol status.

Evacuations and Closures

Lake County: “GO” status for Hwy 16/Fernberg Corridor from the Garden Lake Bridge to the end of the Fernberg at Lake One due to the **Camp Fire**. Evacuate immediately.

St. Louis County: “GO” status for portions of the Echo Trail from Big Lake up to the 200 Road near the **Sioux Fire**. Other areas are under “SET” evacuation notice for **Marian Creek, Ridge, Beaver Tail, Coffin & Echo 2 Fires**

Cook County: Remains at “SET” status at the end of the Gunflint Trail due to the **Little Knife Fire**. The Midtrail area of the Gunflint Trail west of Hungry Jack Lake Rd. and the northern parts of the townships of Schroeder, Tofte, and Lutsen have moved into "READY" status.

Superior National Forest: has issued an expanded Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) Closure Order to protect public and firefighter health and safety. The BWCAW permit issuance and forest closure is being evaluated daily. Notifications are being made to permittees four days prior to permit entry date.

Fire Restrictions

Superior National Forest [Forest-wide Fire Restrictions](#) are also in effect.

Weather and Fire Behavior

A temperature inversion this morning will trap smoke near the surface. Smoke will lessen by the afternoon as temperatures warm with highs reaching the lower 80s. Drier air and mostly sunny skies will drop relative humidity into the 30s while winds out of the northwest gust to 15 mph in the afternoon.

Yesterday's precipitation will likely provide only a temporary pause in fire activity before hotter and drier conditions are forecast to return. Increasing surface fire activity today with potential for isolated torching is expected.

Operations

Non-Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Wildfires

- **Camp:** 4,176 acres. Location—5 miles north of Winton. Cause: Lightning. Yesterday, crews established a handline on the southern perimeter of the fire, connecting the southwest fire perimeter to Camp Lake. Firefighters are evaluating the Echo Trail to establish a containment line from Echo Trail to the western fire perimeter. Hand crews will continue working the hand line on the southeast connecting the handline into natural barriers. Dozers are working the western perimeter of the fire, establishing containment line along two-track roads. Firefighters are evaluating structures south of the fire along Fernberg Road.
- **Sioux:** Approximately 10,837 acres. Location—North of the Echo Trail and east of Jeanette Campground. Portions of the fire are burning in BWCAW. Structure protection efforts were conducted around Meander Lake including the communication site and generator, with sprinklers and hose lays around structures. Today, firefighters will focus structure protection efforts around Moose Loop Lake area and crews will work to establish direct handline south of Echo Trail where the fire crossed to the south. Structure protection will also continue evaluating structures moving south.

Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Wildfires

- **Little Knife:** Originated in Ontario and crossed into the United States on 7/15/26. 6,000 acres (US side). Location - infrared mapping showed growth as far south as Ogishkemuncie Lake. The fire has burned approximately 6,000 acres in the US and 80,000 acres in Canada.
- **Bear Trap (Bear Trap and Dark Fires combined):** Approximately 34,545 acres. Location—South of Lac La Croix, 20 miles N of Ely. Structure protection continues around homes on Big Lake installing hoses and sprinklers, including properties on the south side of the lake. Also, crews are evaluating the Echo Trail and looking for opportunities for masticating efforts to reinforce this road as a containment feature to keep the fire from moving south.
- **Thumb:** 15,394 acres. Remote & located 6 miles S of Gakijiwanong Anishnaabe Nation Canada. Cause: Lightning. Aircraft continue to monitor and patrol the fire on the US side.

Wildfires West of Echo Lake and East of U.S. Hwy 53

Each of these fires are staffed with fire engines and crews who are working on establishing handlines and extinguishing all areas of heat. There is a combined containment of 1% on these ten fires.

- **Chub:** 350.7 acres. Location – North of Chub Lake, southwest of Crane Lake. Firefighters put in hand lines, and a dozer continued to increase the firebreak line around the perimeter. Today, crews will continue to increase those control and contingency lines.
- **Echo 2:** 16.4 acres. Location – off the Echo Rapids Road, north of Echo Lake. Moderate fire activity yesterday. Crews made good progress yesterday, taking advantage of recent rain. Today, crews will continue mop up, extinguishing all areas of heat that are identified.
- **Beaver Tail:** 11.6 acres. Location – West of the Vermilion River. Crews will continue work on the fire to patrol perimeters and cool hot spots after slippery roads made access challenging yesterday.
- **Ridge:** 8 acres. Location – East of the Vermilion River. Firefighters continue to monitor, strengthen control lines, and cool any lingering heat.
- **Creek:** 4.1 acres. Location – Northwest of Chub Lake. Yesterday, there was minimal fire activity. Today, firefighters will patrol the fire, searching for and cooling any lingering heat.

- **Marion Creek Trail:** 16.3 acres. Location – West of the Vermilion River. Yesterday, the fire had minimal activity. Crews will continue mop up by searching for and cooling any lingering heat.
- **Nine:** 5.4 acres. Location – South of Echo Lake. Minimal fire activity yesterday. Crews will continue mop up while searching for smoke and any lingering heat.
- **Camp 5/Duck:** 4.0 acres (Camp Fire); 0.5 acres (Duck Fire). Location – North of Elephant Lake. Minimal to no fire activity. Crews will continue mop up while searching for smoke and any lingering heat.
- **Bug Creek:** 0.1 acre. Crews will continue to monitor the fire, searching for smoke and any lingering heat.
- **Coffin Fire** started 7/9/2026. Size – 0.1 acre. Containment 0%. Crews will continue to monitor the fire, searching for smoke and any lingering heat.

History

On the evening of July 6, a dry thunderstorm moved across northeastern Minnesota and southern Canada resulting in more than 1,000 lightning strikes, causing dozens of fire starts. As unprecedented dry and warm conditions followed in the days after, fires were detected across Cook, Lake and St. Louis counties. Where fires were accessible by ground, firefighters were able to work to keep some of the fire perimeters small in size, however due to the number of fires, locations and number of firefighters and equipment, some of the fires continued to smolder and grow in the following days. Local fire managers ordered many additional resources including engines, hand crews, aviation resources and two incident management teams to support the firefighting efforts. While some of the fires were contained, several have continued to grow due to record breaking high temperatures and low humidity. Additional firefighters, equipment and support staff continue to be ordered including a Complex Incident Management Team.