

Lightning strike adds a third fire

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Two fires that started from lightning strikes are still going strong in the Linville Gorge area.

Over two hundred firefighters have responded to the wildfires, one near Dobson Knob and another near Shortoff Mountain. While the fires started Friday, by yesterday evening they had already burned over 540 and 700 acres, respectively. Rising humidity overnight kept the fire from spreading, according to spokesman Terry Seyden. Last night's forecast of rain did not hold true to the wildfire area, he said.

While rain is a good thing, the thunderstorms expected for this week may make things worse if lightning strikes again, he said. In fact, yesterday brought a new development.

A third fire was reported in Avery County, also caused by lightning. Today that fire is approximately 50 acres.

Firefighters are not sure when the third fire started, but it could have been as early as Friday. Firefighters expect to start burning potential debris kindling to keep the fire contained in the near future. They will be concentrating efforts at the Shortoff site, due to the proximity of private homes. The homes are not threatened at this time, according to Seyden.

All trails and campsites in the Linville Gorge Wilderness are closed until further notice.