

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker, with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, September 2, 2025.

As of yesterday morning, the Bear Gulch Fire has grown to 9,342 acres; containment has decreased from 13% to 10% due to the increase in size.

Despite the August 27 ICE arrests, 258 fire personnel are still working to control the fire and protect structures in the area. According to the *Washington State Standard*, firefighters present at the ICE raid believe that with fire areas closed and roadblocks installed, the federal agents could not have found them without assistance from the California management team in charge of the fire at the time. Firefighters also noted that the raid took place on the California team's final day, hours before a Washington team rotated in to take command.

According to daily Incident Action Plans filed by California Interagency Incident Management Team 7 and posted online, the two crews targeted by federal agents had previously been digging holding lines, working to protect structures, and conducting mop-up work. The crews had not been assigned to work together prior to the raid. But on August 27, both crews were deployed to a staging area to cut firewood for the local community. One firefighter present at the raid said a division supervisor told crews he would meet them at the site but never showed up.

After arriving at the site, the crews reportedly found logs from a timber operation, and rather than damage a logging company's property, waited for the supervisor to show up with further instructions. But after an hour, unmarked law enforcement vehicles pulled up to the site and federal officials spent three hours questioning the firefighters.

According to Congresswoman Emily Randall, 44 firefighters were forced to show their identification and answer questions. Randall led a congressional letter signed by 49 representatives demanding accountability for the actions of those who "entered an active disaster zone, terrorized workers risking their lives to save our communities, and left us all less safe in the process." Representative Randall, who paid a visit to the ICE detention center in Tacoma to check on the welfare of the arrested firefighters, added, "These firefighters deserve respect, not handcuffs. They deserve support, not deportation threats. And our communities deserve emergency responders who can do their jobs without fear of being arrested for the crime of trying to save land and lives." Randall's congressional letter questions whether the 2021 DHS policy – which restricts immigration enforcement at disaster response locations – remains in place, what specific circumstances warranted these arrests, and whether standard protocols and interagency coordination were observed.

In a news release, U.S. Customs and Border Protection said its agents were assisting with an investigation led by the federal Bureau of Land Management. Multiple wildfire sources said the feds claimed they had uncovered fraud on timecards submitted by the crews, but the Customs and Border Protection news release announcing the immigration arrests made no mention of time sheets or any evidence that the investigation had turned up fraud.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources – the state's lead wildfire response agency – said federal officials did not notify their state counterparts about the investigation. And in Washington and Oregon, elected leaders have decried the raids and are pushing for more information on the status of the firefighters who were arrested. Federal immigration officials have said little since announcing the arrests.

Washington State governor Bob Ferguson has proclaimed September 2025 Eat Local Month to honor the farmers, fishermen, and food artisans who provide fresh, healthy, and sustainably produced food for us all to enjoy. Eat Local Month celebrates the bounty of Washington's local food with events and experiences throughout the state, including farm tours, farm-to-table dinners, farm and fish markets, festivals, and more. To learn more, visit <https://eatlocalfirst.org/eat-local-month/>.

And finally, today marks the first day of the new school year, so remember: if you're traveling through school zones: drive slowly at all times and 20 miles per hour when lights flash. Be sure to stop for school buses and watch closely for pedestrians and people on bicycles.

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at noon and 5pm. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Diane Walker. Thank you for listening.