

Executive summary

Wildfire in Oregon is presenting an increasing threat to life and property in the state. As the state confronts the threat from wildfire in the future, mitigation on an individual property basis is one way Oregonians can become more resistant to damage from wildfire. Mitigation on the individual property level means creating and maintaining defensible space around the home and building homes using materials and design choices that are resistant to damage from wildfire. With the new section R327 wildfire mitigation building standards to be adopted once the Statewide Wildfire Hazard Map is final, the Oregon Legislature directed the Department of the State Fire Marshal and the Department of Consumer and Business Services to develop a report outlining what a proactive home hardening grant program might look like.

In this report, we first define what wildfire mitigation means and explore the two primary components of mitigation on the individual property level: the creation and management of defensible space and wildfire home hardening. We look at both of these aspects individually but also emphasize the importance of seeing these as two parts of a single cohesive mitigation system that is most effective when working together. From there, we look at the slate of state-administered, wildfire-related grant programs and their intent as well as the populations they target.

We then focus on several specific considerations that would need to be addressed in developing a proactive home hardening program, including:

- How best to conduct outreach and education, particularly in vulnerable communities
- Who would be eligible for the program
- Whether the program would be a reimbursement or disbursement program
- What improvements the program would incentivize
- How to verify the improvements
- The importance of ensuring the grant is a sufficient incentive for households that might not otherwise be able to afford the improvement

We close with the observation that the Department of the State Fire Marshal would be an appropriate agency to administer a proactive home hardening program and the Department of Consumer and Business Services Building Codes Division could provide valuable subject matter expertise. Additionally, we provide some recommendations for the process of developing a proactive home hardening program.