



OREGON STATE FIRE MARSHAL

THE GATED WYE

DECEMBER 2024



'TIS THE SEASON FOR FIRE SAFETY

The holiday season is just around the corner, and that means more Oregonians will be cooking in the kitchen, stringing up lights, and cozying up to a warm fire.

Each year around this time, firefighters are called to hundreds of home fires.

In this issue of The Gated Wye, we have a whole host of tips and tricks to keep you and your family safe this holiday season. **[Read more on page 2.](#)**

OSFM'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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LIVE, LAUGH, NEVER PLUG A POWER STRIP INTO ANOTHER POWER STRIP.



The winter months are prime for holiday cheer and time with family, but they also come with a greater risk of fires inside the home. According to FEMA, Christmas trees account for hundreds of fires each year across the U.S. Typically, shorts in electrical lights or open flames from candles, lighters, or matches start tree fires.

From 2016-2020, 19% of home decoration fires in Oregon were started by candles. In December, that number increased slightly to 22%. Forty-four percent of decoration fires started by candles happened in November, December, and January. The peak month for home cooking fires in Oregon is December.

The average number of monthly cooking fires for January-November is 76. In December, that number jumps dramatically to a total of 112, 32% higher than other months. These stats highlight the importance of fire safety during the winter months and taking extra precautions around holiday festivities.

WINTER FIRE SAFETY: CHECK THE LIST & CHECK IT TWICE

- ☐ Test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms to make sure they're working correctly.
- ☐ If your plans involve a holiday tree, choose one with fresh, deep-green color and flexible needles.
- ☐ Remember to water your tree daily — a tree may consume between a quart and a gallon of water per day. Be sure you have at least three feet between the tree and heating sources.
- ☐ Ensure the tree is not blocking an exit and that the decorations you use are flame-resistant and flame-retardant.
- ☐ Always unplug tree lights before leaving home or going to bed. Check your holiday lights before displaying them; inspect them each year for frayed wires, bare spots, and broken or cracked sockets.
- ☐ Avoid overloading electrical sockets. Do not link more than three light strands, unless the manufacturer's instructions indicate it is safe.

8 TIPS TO KEEP YOUR HOME HEATED SAFELY THIS WINTER

With the winter months upon us, many are turning up thermostats and looking to home heating options. The Oregon State Fire Marshal offers the following tips to avoid sparking an unintended fire.

- Use heating equipment with the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Keep things that can burn, such as paper, curtains, bedding, or furniture, at least three feet away from all heating equipment, including fireplaces, wood stoves, and pellet stoves.
- Use newer, portable space heaters with an automatic shut-off so they will turn off if they're tipped over. Clean them each year before using and check for product recalls.
- Unplug portable space heaters when not in use, before going to bed, or when leaving the room.
- Make sure fuel-burning heaters are designed for indoor use and are properly ventilated.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected at least once a year by a qualified professional.
- With wood stoves and fireplaces, burn only dry, seasoned wood. In pellet stoves, burn only dry, seasoned pellets.
- Place ashes in a metal container, soak with water, and keep them at least 10 feet away from the home or anything that can burn. Dispose of the ash only after it is cool.



DECORATE RESPONSIBLY: FIRE SAFETY TIPS FROM THE OSFM

Decorating a Christmas tree is a beloved tradition, but it's important to prioritize safety. Whether you choose a natural or artificial tree, follow these quick tips to keep your holidays safe and festive.

Natural Tree Tips

- Pick fresh: Choose a tree with green needles that don't fall off easily.
- Prep and place: Cut two inches off the trunk before placing the tree in the stand. Keep it at least three feet from heat sources and make sure it doesn't block exits.
- Hydrate: Add water to the stand daily to prevent the tree from drying out.

Lighting Safety

- Use UL-certified lights:
 - Green UL for indoor use only.
 - Red UL for indoor/outdoor use.
- Inspect for damage: Replace worn cords or loose bulbs and follow manufacturer instructions.
- Turn off lights when leaving home or going to bed.
- Never use candles on the tree.

Artificial Tree Caution

Pre-lit artificial trees can also pose fire risks. Despite "flame-retardant" claims, these trees can burn quickly. Follow the same precautions as with a natural tree: inspect lights, keep the tree away from heat sources, and unplug when not in use.

By taking these steps, you can enjoy a safe and happy holiday season!



WELCOME, EVAN LEMKE

Evan Lemke joins the OSFM Fire and Life Safety Division as a life safety code surveyor in the Healthcare Unit! Evan comes to us from ODHS child welfare where she worked as a foster home certifier. She brings experience in child and adult protective services and has a bachelor's degree from Washington State University.

Outside of work, Evan enjoys spending time with her family, playing on a national hurling/camogie team, and paddling with Salem's dragon boat team, the Angry Unicorns. Her family is also passionate about community service, including coaching youth sports.

DEFENSIBLE SPACE INCENTIVE PROGRAM EXPANDS TO MORE COMMUNITIES



The Oregon State Fire Marshal is extending its defensible space incentive program to reach more wildfire-prone communities statewide. The program offers a \$250 incentive to eligible home and property owners who get a defensible space assessment conducted by the OSFM or a participating fire agency.

The goal is to reduce financial barriers and encourage Oregonians to implement recommendations from their assessments. By expanding this initiative, the OSFM continues to build more fire-adapted communities and reduce the devastating impact of wildfires on lives, property, and the environment.

Eligible communities were chosen based on wildfire and social vulnerability, ensuring resources are directed where they're most needed. After the assessment, eligible participants will receive their incentive by mail.

You are encouraged to share this opportunity with your communities to boost engagement and help people take proactive steps. For program details and scheduling, visit oregondefensiblespace.org. For a list of eligible communities, [click here](#).

Together, we can strengthen Oregon's wildfire resilience.

DEADLINE FOR 2025 OREGON FIRE CODE PROPOSALS DUE SOON

The code development process for the 2025 Oregon Fire Code is underway and we want to hear from you. The Oregon State Fire Marshal is accepting change proposals through the end of the year. Proposals are accepted until **December 31, 2024**.

You find more about the Oregon Fire Code, the code process, and the code proposal form on the [OSFM's website](#).



RING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH FIREWORK SAFETY



At the end of December, we will be saying so long 2024, hello 2025! With that comes New Year celebrations and a reminder to be safe with fireworks if they are in your calendar page-turning celebrations. The Oregon State Fire Marshal reminds people who choose to use fireworks to do so safely. Oregonians are reminded to keep it safe and keep it legal. Please help share our message about fireworks safety.

- **BE Prepared:** Before lighting fireworks: keep water available by using a garden hose or bucket.
- **BE Safe:** When lighting fireworks: keep children and pets away from fireworks.
- **BE Responsible:** After lighting fireworks: never relight a dud. Please wait 15 to 20 minutes, then soak it in a bucket of water before disposal.
- **BE Aware:** Use only legal fireworks and use them only in legal places.

HOLLOWAY HONORED BY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ARSON INVESTIGATORS

Deputy State Fire Marshal Rich Holloway was honored with the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) Award of Recognition at a recent OSFM all-staff meeting. The award acknowledges his outstanding service to fire prevention and investigation in Douglas County.

Nominated by Fire Marshal Cheryl Flick of the Roseburg Fire Department, Holloway was praised for his passion and commitment. "Rich is a shining example of a caring and passionate teacher in our industry," Flick said. "His passion is contagious, and our success is his success."

Holloway has become a vital resource for local and rural firehouses, offering investigation assistance and education. Known for his organized and clear teaching style, he has made a lasting impact on fire safety efforts in the community.

This award highlights Holloway's dedication to his profession and the positive influence he has had on Douglas County.





OREGON STATE FIRE MARSHAL

OSFM INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS RECRUITMENT

The Oregon State Fire Marshal administers three **all-hazard** incident management teams with members from the structural fire service. The teams mobilize primarily to fire incidents threatening lives and structures and also manage a variety of other incidents.

2025 SEASON OPEN RECRUITMENT

RECRUITMENT OPENED NOVEMBER 15, 2024.

ALL APPLICATIONS DUE BY 5 P.M. DECEMBER 31, 2024.

(APPLICATIONS CAN BE FOUND ON THE OREGON STATE FIRE MARSHAL WEBSITE)

The OSFM is seeking applications from qualified individuals or trainee qualified for the following positions:

Line Safety
Public Information Officer
Division/Group Supervisor
Planning Section Chief
Resource Unit Leader
Situation Unit Leader
Geographic Information Systems Specialist
Logistics Section Chief
Communications Unit Leader & Technician

APPLICATIONS FOR ALL POSITIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED AND REVIEWED.

Applicants who do not meet the qualification criteria will not be accepted.

All applicants are asked to submit:

- Application signed by your chief officer
- Letter of intent including a summary of conflagration and incident management experience
- Two professional references

[LEARN MORE HERE](#)

The recruitment process is selective. Applicants, their provided references, and/or others within the applicant's agency may be contacted by OSFM staff, incident commanders, and/or IMT section chiefs during the selection process. Applicants should be expected to be interviewed. **Please send completed applications and required materials to:**

shane.wooton@osfm.oregon.gov

Team members are expected to be available to respond during their team's on-call rotations and remain at an incident for up to 14 days. Team members should be prepared to be logistically self-sufficient for 72 hours.

Team members should have the full support of their sponsoring agencies to participate in training, working groups, and the annual conference. Team members should have access to an agency command vehicle for deployments. It is the expectation of the OSFM and the incident commanders that all team members provide the highest level of customer service to all involved and impacted by an incident. Team members represent their home agency and the state of Oregon and are expected to act professionally.



STATE FIRE MARSHAL SWEARS IN NEW **OFDDA** BOARD MEMBERS

At the annual meeting of the Oregon Fire District Directors Association (OFDDA) in November, State Fire Marshal Mariana Ruiz-Temple swore in the association’s newly elected board members.

The OFDDA, founded in 1950, has a long history of collaboration and strengthening fire service operations across Oregon. The organization plays a vital role in advancing legislation, offering education, and providing resources that benefit fire districts statewide.

With a focus on teamwork, the association emphasizes unity among fire service professionals to ensure effective service at every level, from firegrounds to boardrooms.

As part of the ceremony, Ruiz-Temple acknowledged the crucial role of the OFDDA and its members in shaping Oregon’s fire service. The newly sworn-in board members will continue this legacy, working to uphold the organization’s mission of collaboration and advocacy.

JOSEPH MORNEAU

PRESIDENT
COBURG FIRE DIST.

CURTIS HOOPES

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
CHILOQUIN FIRE & RESCUE

ANGIE FRYE

DIRECTOR – POSITION #4
DRAKE’S CROSSING RFPD

KENTON JOHNSON

CHAPLAIN
CLACKAMAS FIRE DIST. 1

JAY CROSS

1ST VICE PRESIDENT
CLACKAMAS FIRE DIST. 1

BRANDON FOWLER

DIRECTOR – POSITION #2
CHILOQUIN FIRE & RESCUE

BRAD KING

DIRECTOR – POSITION #5
JUNCTION CITY RFPD

CHERYL JOHNSON

2ND VICE PRESIDENT
ILLINOIS VALLEY FIRE DIST.

DON THOMPSON

DIRECTOR – POSITION #3
NORTH BAY RFPD

BOBBY MEYER

DIRECTOR – POSITION #6
AURORA RFPD #63

**SIGN UP
OPENS SOON**



TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

RISK-BASED RESPONSE TO BATTERY EMERGENCIES

Back by popular demand, the Oregon State Fire Marshal is excited to offer training on **risk-based response to battery emergencies**.

This 8-hour course includes classroom and hands-on training to prepare responders to conduct risk-based response to battery emergencies for multiple types of batteries including lithium-ion (Li-Ion). The course covers batteries found in transportation, including passenger vehicles, ground transport, air and sea shipping, as well as residential, commercial, and industrial settings.

The cost for the class, travel, lodging and per-diem will be paid for through the HMEP Grant. The class is open to all emergency responders with an emphasis given to firefighters. It is recommended that all participants be trained to the HAZMAT Operations level or higher before the class.

These classes are provided through a partnership with the hosting agencies. Classes are limited to 30.

Registration will open on **January 2, 2025**.

Sign-up will close on February 13, 2025, at 5 p.m.

FEBRUARY 20, 2025

Medford Fire Sta. #14
2208 Table Rock Rd
Medford, OR 97504

FEBRUARY 22, 2025

Banks Fire District
13430 NW Main St
Banks, OR 97106

FEBRUARY 21, 2025

Coburg Fire District
91232 N Coburg Rd
Coburg, OR 97408

Questions about this and other trainings offered by the Oregon State Fire Marshal please contact:

Training Specialist Rick Heuchert
richard.heuchert@osfm.oregon.gov
503-983-3860



REGISTER NOW

CLICK REGISTER NOW OR SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE AND REGISTER.

OSFM HOSTS STEPS TO SAFETY TRAINING

On October 30, the Oregon State Fire Marshal hosted a "Steps to Safety" training in partnership with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and other state, regional, and local organizations. The training focused on protecting older adults from fire and fall hazards, bringing together 47 attendees from 11 counties, including many rural areas.

Held at the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) in Salem, the event featured expert presenters from national, state, and local organizations. Topics ranged from home safety assessments to injury prevention, wellness programs, and aging support services. Attendees included fire service personnel, EMS providers, healthcare professionals, and community stakeholders, all united in their commitment to safeguarding Oregon's aging population.

The training highlighted the importance of collaboration in addressing fire and fall risks for adults older than 65. Attendees expressed interest in expanding the program to rural areas across Oregon, emphasizing the need for regional presentations and localized outreach.

Next steps include identifying at-risk communities, building regional partnerships, and hosting follow-up webinars to share insights and data. This successful event marked a significant step forward in promoting safety and education for vulnerable populations across the state.



OSFM ENGINE PROGRAM DELIVERIES MARCH ON

The OSFM Engine Program continues to progress, with 80% of the 76 firefighting apparatus delivered to local fire agencies statewide. Tender deliveries are nearly complete, with just one remaining.

In October, the program hosted a well-attended webinar for participating agencies, providing guidance on accessing important forms, standard operating procedures, and other tools on [the OSFM website](#).

About the Program

The OSFM Engine Program strengthens Oregon's firefighting capabilities by delivering state-of-the-art firefighting equipment to local agencies. Developed with input from a 2021 gap analysis and fire defense boards, the program addresses growing wildfire threat by supporting local responses, facilitating regional mutual aid, and managing conflagrations.

Equipped with Type 3 and 6 engines and tactical tenders, the program helps agencies protect their communities and boost and modernize capacity within the Oregon Fire Mutual Aid System. Funded by Senate Bill 762, Oregon's wildfire omnibus bill, the program is a huge step forward in protecting Oregon communities.



WELCOME, DARRIN WITMER

Darrin Witmer joins the OSFM as a compliance specialist for the CR2K program!

Born and raised in Keizer, Darrin is the youngest of five siblings and a proud graduate of McNary High School and Chemeketa Community College. For the past decade, he has ensured public spaces comply with Americans with Disabilities Act regulations.

In his free time, Darrin enjoys outdoor adventures with his wife, family, and friends. He also serves his community as a volunteer tender operator with Aumsville Fire.



OSFM TEAM MEMBERS JOIN USFA WORKGROUPS

Several members of the Oregon State Fire Marshal (OSFM) were selected for U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) workgroups as part of the agency's one voice initiative to make sure we are speaking with "one voice" on fire and life safety. The OSFM team will showcase Oregon's leadership in fire service innovation and safety.

- *Behavioral Health:* Matt Laas, fire service safety specialist, will contribute to improving mental health resources for the fire service.
- *Emergency Operations:* State Fire Marshal Mariana Ruiz-Temple will focus on wildfire response, while Chief Mariah Rawlins will address emerging threats and incident management.
- *Community Risk Reduction:* Chief Chad Hawkins will work on enhancing fire codes and standards, and both Chief Deputy Claire McGrew and Ruiz-Temple will advance wildfire preparedness through fire-adapted communities initiatives. Dr. Eric Gemmil joined the data and technology workgroup.



These appointments reflect Oregon's commitment to shaping national policies that support first responders and enhance community safety. Congratulations to all for this recognition and their impactful contributions!

HMEP GRANT APPLICATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED

2025-2026 Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant applications are now open! The HMEP Grant helps communities prepare for emergencies involving hazardous materials. It provides funding for training, planning, and exercises to improve local emergency response.

Who can apply?

State, local, and tribal governments are eligible to apply. Priority will be given to local emergency planning committees (LEPC).

What does the grant cover?

The grant supports projects that help communities plan for and respond to hazardous materials incidents, including transportation accidents.

Applications are now being accepted. Be sure to apply by the deadline to secure funding for your community's safety efforts! Learn more on our [website](#).



CODES CORNER

HOLIDAY DECOR AND NATURAL DECORATIONS

According to the National Fire Protection Association, Christmas decorations cause, on average, four deaths and about \$14 million in property damage every year in the U.S. Nearly 800 house fires start from holiday decorations, mostly in living rooms. December and January are also the peak months for candle-related fires.

The Oregon Fire Code has specific rules to reduce risks from decorations in public buildings like schools, care facilities, and gathering places. These are especially important during the holidays to keep people safe.

- **Natural Cut Trees (Section 806):**

- Trees can't block exits, hallways, lobbies, or entryways.
- Candles and open flames can't be placed on or near decorations or trees.
- Trees must be kept away from heat vents and any open flames or heat sources by at least the height of the tree.

- **Other Rules (Section 807):**

- Covers fire safety requirements for flammable decorations, artificial plants, and decorations based on the type of building.

These codes help ensure holiday decorations don't create fire hazards, especially in busy public spaces.

For more than 20 years, the Oregon State Fire Marshal has provided Technical Advisory No. 22-09, Holiday Décor and Fire Safety Guidelines. It provides guidance on the use of decorative items during holiday seasons.



NEW DATA REPORTING SYSTEM ON THE WAY FOR OREGON, U.S.

The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) is transitioning from the legacy National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) to a new reporting and analytics system known as the National Emergency Reporting Information System (NERIS). This change will boost the quality and comprehensiveness of fire incident data collected across the nation. NFIRS will sunset around January 1, 2026.

The Oregon State Fire Marshal is piloting a statewide reporting system called NERIS+ in collaboration with the USFA and the Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI). NERIS+ is based on the new national reporting framework.

Oregon fire and EMS agencies do not need to take any action to onboard onto NERIS. The OSFM is working with its partners to test the workflows between Oregon NERIS+ and NERIS. Once they are operational, Oregon agencies will transition to the new NERIS reporting system.

All local incident reports will be submitted and received simultaneously by Oregon and NERIS through a single submission.

Here are some important points regarding Oregon's NERIS+ system:

- **Enhanced Data Collection:** NERIS+ will store more detailed fire data statewide and automate incident reporting, helping Oregon's fire service better analyze local fire issues.
- **Streamlined Compliance:** The system will simplify reporting by allowing local fire agencies to meet state and national requirements with one submission, eliminating duplicate data entry.
- **Broad Compatibility:** NERIS+ will work with various third-party software and offer a direct entry option for agencies without third-party tools.
- **We're refining the reporting process and data requirements for NERIS+.** Once finalized, we'll share timelines for system development, testing, and training.

For now, keep using NFIRS as usual. Questions? Contact Eric Gemmil at eric.gemmil@osfm.oregon.gov or the A&I Unit at osfm.data@osfm.oregon.gov.



FROM THE INTERNET

Warm Springs Fire and Safety hosted a flammable liquids and gas training. This takes extreme teamwork and communication. The goal in this scenario is to cool the tank rather than put out the flame so the firefighter can safely turn off the tank.

The Department of Public Safety Standards and Training brought the live fire prop to Warm Springs for the training. BTW, there is video! [You should check it out here!](#)

SEARCH IS ON! —————

In early November, recruits at Dundee Fire and Rescue learned how to search for victims and rescue them. They also learned about Rapid Intervention Team, which is a designated team of firefighters on a fire ground who go in and rescue firefighters when a mayday is called over the radio.

Check out their post [here with more pictures.](#)



ANALYTICS & INTELLIGENCE Reporting Reminders

Has there been a fire related death or serious injury?

Please remember to submit a Fire Casualty Report Form (ORS 476.210). The form can be found at: [Fire Casualty Report Form](#)

**Note: the form must be completed by the primary responding fire agency and in addition to the NFIRS Fire Incident Report.*

Has there been a change in your agency's contact information or leadership?

If so, please remember to complete the appropriate contact update form found here: [Fire Agency Contact Update Forms](#)

Have a NFIRS question? Need Coding Help? Struggling with Elite?

If you need help related to incident reporting or the state repository, please reach out to the Fire Incident Reporting System Program Coordinator Michelle Vold.
(503-586-6568 | michelle.vold@osfm.oregon.gov)



CONTACT US

Have a story idea or something you would like to know more about?

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