



OREGON STATE FIRE MARSHAL

# THE GATED WYE

FEBRUARY 2025



## OREGON RESPONDS TO HISTORIC WILDFIRES

As wildfires raged across Southern California, Oregon stepped up to provide critical support. Fire crews, emergency personnel, and resources were deployed to help battle the fast-moving blazes that scorched thousands of acres and forced mass evacuations.

Oregon's response included sending specialized wildfire teams, equipment, and aid to affected communities. Officials emphasized the importance of regional cooperation in combating these devastating fires.

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OSFM'S MONTHLY  
NEWSLETTER

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## WILDFIRES RAGE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, OREGON RESPONDS

In January 2025, Oregon's fire service made history with its largest out-of-state deployment, sending 21 strike teams to Southern California to support catastrophic wildfires. Coordinated by the Oregon State Fire Marshal, this monumental effort included 370 firefighters, 105 fire engines and water tenders, and resources from 96 local fire agencies spanning 23 of Oregon's 36 counties.

These teams worked tirelessly to help contain wildfires as they worked assignments on the Palisades, Eaton, and Lilac fires. The Oregon team focused on extinguishing hotspots, protecting structures, and creating shaded fuel breaks to slow fire spread.

Firefighters worked in challenging conditions on 24-hour shifts, alongside teams from several states, Canada, and Mexico. Despite the tough work, morale remained high, with Oregon's crews receiving tremendous support from the affected communities. In one extraordinary act of service, firefighters from the Douglas County strike team rescued two injured older adults trapped in their home without communication, food, or water for several days. In another moment, Multnomah County firefighters rescued a dehydrated cat they named "Domino," and ensured it made it to safety.

During the deployment, State Fire Marshal Mariana Ruiz-Temple traveled to Southern California to meet with CAL FIRE officials, tour fire-affected areas, and speak with Oregon firefighters about their work. She praised their resilience and dedication, noting how these collaborative efforts strengthen both states' abilities to respond to future emergencies.

By January 23, 17 strike teams began their journey home, with the remaining teams staying to provide additional support. On January 26, all teams had been demobilized and headed back to their home agencies.

The deployment highlighted the strength of the Oregon Fire Mutual Aid System and the power of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, which makes it possible to share resources across state lines during emergencies.

This extraordinary mission is a testament to the unwavering commitment of the Oregon fire service to protect lives and property, no matter where the call for help comes from.





# LEARNING FROM WILDFIRES

In January, the Oregon State Fire Marshal took a significant step in advancing wildfire resilience efforts by touring the damage caused by recent California wildfires. Accompanied by the Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) Director and Wildfire Policy Director, the OSFM joined forces with CAL FIRE to assess affected homes and discuss groundbreaking research focused on improving wildfire resistance in communities.

**Firsthand Insight into Wildfire Devastation:** Walking through neighborhoods impacted by the wildfires, the OSFM, IBHS, and CAL FIRE examined the aftermath of the blaze, gaining valuable insights into how homes and landscapes responded to the fire's intensity. This hands-on experience underscored the critical importance of effective mitigation strategies, like defensible space, fire-resistant construction materials, and community-wide preparedness.

**Collaboration with IBHS:** The partnership with IBHS is important to advancing research and innovation in wildfire resilience. By combining the OSFM's expertise in community protection with IBHS's cutting-edge research, this collaboration will:

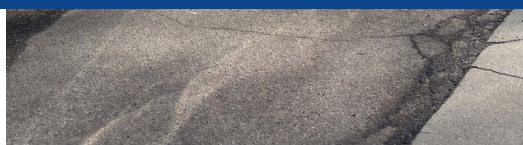
- Identify factors that contribute to home survival during wildfires.
- Develop actionable recommendations for homeowners and builders.
- Promote science-backed practices that enhance safety and reduce risk.

**Why This Matters for Oregon:** Oregon faces increasing wildfire threats, with communities across the state vulnerable to devastating losses. Learning from California's experiences and leveraging research from IBHS equips Oregon's wildfire response teams with the tools needed to strengthen resilience. The insights gained from this visit will inform policies, training, and community outreach efforts, ensuring a proactive approach to wildfire preparedness.

**Looking Ahead:** The OSFM's tour of California's wildfire damage serves as a reminder of the shared challenges that wildfire-prone states face. By fostering collaboration and prioritizing research-driven solutions, Oregon is taking bold steps toward creating safer communities. This partnership with IBHS and CAL FIRE marks a pivotal moment in the fight against wildfires, one that will have lasting impacts on how homes and communities prepare for and respond to these threats.



# PHOTOS FROM THE FIRELINE





# HEY OREGON: LET'S TALK DEFENSIBLE SPACE

As winter begins to wane and spring approaches, February is an excellent time for Oregon homeowners to start planning defensible space projects around their properties. Creating and maintaining defensible space—the buffer zone between your home and the surrounding vegetation—is a critical step in reducing wildfire risk and protecting your home.

## **Why Start Now?**

Planning in February allows ample time to assess your property, gather necessary materials, and implement changes before the peak wildfire season begins. Early action ensures that you're prepared and gives you the flexibility to tackle larger projects without the pressure of an imminent wildfire threat.

## **What Is Defensible Space?**

Defensible space involves managing vegetation, debris, and other combustible materials to slow the spread of wildfire and provide a safe area for firefighters to operate. Key practices include:

- Removing dead vegetation and leaves.
- Trimming tree branches away from roofs and chimneys.
- Spacing plants and trees to prevent fire from spreading.
- Using fire-resistant landscaping materials.

## **Free Assistance from the Oregon State Fire Marshal**

To make the process easier, the Oregon State Fire Marshal offers free defensible space assessments to homeowners. These assessments provide personalized recommendations tailored to your property's unique conditions. Fire experts will evaluate your home's surroundings and offer practical, actionable advice to improve your wildfire resilience.

## **How to Get Started**

Scheduling a defensible space assessment is simple. Contact the Oregon State Fire Marshal to request an appointment. With its expert guidance, you can create a safer environment for your home while contributing to your community's overall wildfire preparedness.

# GET COMFORTABLE WITH **DEFENSIBLE SPACE.**



## **FIVE** SPRING PROJECTS TO CREATE **DEFENSIBLE SPACE:**

- 1** **Remove** leaves, pine needles, and other debris from the roof, gutters, and on and under the deck.
- 2** **Trim** tall plants and bushes growing directly under your eaves.
- 3** **Trim** trees and bushes to make sure they have adequate space from your home and other vegetation.
- 4** **Remove** dead and combustible plants and mulch, especially within the first several feet from the home. Replace with decorative rock or gravel.
- 5** **Cover** exterior attic vents, soffit vents, and areas below decks and patios with 1/8" metal wire mesh.

[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP FOR  
A \*\*FREE DEFENSIBLE ASSESSMENT.\*\*](#)





# CANNON BEACH FIRE RESCUE MAN FROM SURF

In mid-January, the Cannon Beach Fire District conducted a daring rescue after a 19-year-old boogie boarder went missing in rough surf north of Haystack Rock.

The incident occurred near sunset when a group entered the ocean with boogie boards. While most exited the water safely, one individual did not return. Rescue crews, joined by a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter, launched a search effort in 8-to-12-foot waves and complete darkness.

A rescue swimmer entered the frigid water on a rescue surfboard and paddled through the pounding surf, guided only by faint cries for help. After several minutes, the swimmer located the missing man about 50-75 yards offshore, clinging to his boogie board and partially submerged. The swimmer secured the man onto the surfboard and brought him safely back to shore just before the Coast Guard arrived.

"I cannot express how lucky this guy was to be found," said Ocean Safety Division Head Koa Lyu. "The water was really cold, and he wouldn't have lasted much longer before hypothermia set in."

The man was evaluated by paramedics and released at the scene. The fire district extended its gratitude to the Cannon Beach Police Department, Medix Ambulance, and the U.S. Coast Guard for their assistance.







## FEBRUARY FOCUS: ELECTRICAL SAFETY AT HOME

In February, the OSFM is focused on promoting electrical fire safety. Each year in Oregon, firefighters are called to home fires sparked by an electrical issue.

There are simple things Oregonians can do to reduce their risk and increase their safety from an electrical fire.

- Avoid pinching cords between walls and furniture. Do not run electrical cords under carpets or across doorways.
- Avoid electrical overload. Consider having an electrician install additional wall outlets where you need them and add a breaker if needed.
- Electrical work should be done by a qualified professional. Read the manufacturer's instructions before operating any electrical or heating equipment or appliances.
- Replace items (appliances) with cracked or damaged electrical cords, broken plugs, or loose connections.
- Plug appliances (portable space heaters, refrigerators, stoves, washers, dryers, etc.) directly into a wall outlet and never into a power strip or extension cord.
- Extension cords are for temporary use only.
- Make sure you have working smoke alarms on every level of your home (including the basement), inside each bedroom, and in the hallway outside each bedroom.
- Make sure you have working carbon monoxide alarms on every level of your home with bedrooms, inside each bedroom, and in the hallway outside each bedroom.

Does your agency need fire prevention education materials? [You can place an order here.](#)



# OREGON **NERIS+** UPDATE

As Oregon and the nation move to an updated data collection and information system, the Oregon State Fire Marshal is dedicated to providing updates. As a reminder, the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) is transitioning from the legacy National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) to a new reporting and analytics system called the National Emergency Response Information System or NERIS. In collaboration with USFA and the Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI), Oregon is piloting a statewide reporting system called NERIS+.

Once operational, all local incident reports will be submitted one time and received by both the State of Oregon and the national NERIS repositories through a single submission.

Several steps are underway to implement NERIS+ successfully. The Oregon State Fire Marshal (OSFM) has been identifying additional data elements to include in NERIS+ that are important for analyzing the fire problem in Oregon and the actions taken to mitigate these risks. Collaboration with USFA and FSRI continues to develop the process and schedule for onboarding all agencies in Oregon at a single point in time. In short, agencies do not need to take any action to onboard onto the national platform.

To help prepare for transitioning to NERIS, keep an eye out for the Annual Fire Profile Survey, which will be emailed in the coming days. The information provided in the survey related to Incident Reporting Contacts will serve as the primary point of contact for coordinating onboarding, learning, and training agency members on NERIS+.

Additional details about the development, timeline, training, and onboarding process for NERIS+ will be shared in the coming months. For any questions, please contact the Analytics & Intelligence Unit at [osfm.data@osfm.oregon.gov](mailto:osfm.data@osfm.oregon.gov). In the meantime, continue submitting fire incident reports as normal using NFIRS.

# WELCOME TO THE TEAM!



Please join us in welcoming Dylan Webb as the newest regional mobilization coordinator (RMC) for Central Oregon! Dylan brings nearly two decades of experience in the Oregon fire service, having previously served as the fire chief for Crescent Rural Fire District and deputy chief at Klamath County Fire District 1. He has also contributed to the OSFM incident management teams as a resource unit leader.

Dylan is in the final term of his fire administration bachelor's degree at Columbia Southern University. Outside of work, he and his wife Ashley recently celebrated their ninth anniversary and enjoy spending time outdoors with their eight-year-old son Cash and their yellow lab, Sig. Whether hunting, fishing, or camping, Dylan embraces all that Oregon's great outdoors has to offer.

We're excited to have Dylan on board. Please join us in welcoming him to the team!

## IT'S TIME TO NOMINATE FOR THE OSFM SPARKY AWARDS!

The Oregon State Fire Marshal is accepting nominations for the 2025 Golden and Silver Sparky Awards.

The Golden Sparky recognizes a fire service member or fire agency for outstanding fire prevention or public safety education achievement. The Silver Sparky recognizes a civilian or civilian agency for outstanding achievement in fire prevention or public safety education.

Nominations are open until April 1. Please submit your completed Sparky nomination form with an explanation and examples of your nominee's achievements.

To nominate someone, fill out and submit the form on the [OSFM's website](#).



**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

*For questions about this and other trainings offered by the Oregon State Fire Marshal please contact:*

**Training Specialist Rick Heuchert**  
[richard.heuchert@osfm.oregon.gov](mailto:richard.heuchert@osfm.oregon.gov)  
503-983-3860



**REGISTER NOW**

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

# FEBRUARY SB 762 REPORT RELEASED

This month, our agency released the biannual Senate Bill 762 report to the legislature. The OSFM is required to submit this report every six months outlining the important work our agency is doing with Senate Bill 762 funds.

Highlights of this report include the work of the OSFM's Community Risk Reduction Unit, Defensible Space Program, the 2024 record-setting wildfire season, and recommendations from the state fire marshal.

You can read [the report here](#).

## HAZMAT BY RAIL REPORT RELEASED

In 2015, Governor Kate Brown signed legislation relating to the safe transport of hazardous materials by rail. This changed Oregon Revised Statutes 453.307 to 453.414 relating to the safe transport of hazardous materials by directing the Oregon State Fire Marshal to coordinate training, preparedness, and response planning activities to focus on oil or hazardous materials spills or releases during rail transport.

This law mandates the OSFM adopt by administrative rule (837-120-0520) a plan for the coordinated response to oil or hazardous material spills or releases during rail transport, identify response resources (existing and needed), and coordinate training for emergency responders.

The report, prepared by the OSFM for the Oregon legislature, highlights activities completed in 2024 for emergency planning and training and community outreach activities. It also summarizes the OSFM's resource coordination, information-sharing activities, and plans for the coming year. [A copy of the full report is available on the OSFM website.](#)



2024 ANNUAL REPORT  
**HAZMAT BY RAIL  
PROGRAM**  
DECEMBER // 2024





# CODES CORNER

## WINTER FIRE SAFETY

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the highest number of structure fire incidents in the U.S. happen in the winter, most between November and February. Fires in commercial buildings can happen any time of year, but risks rise during winter. The colder months often bring increased use of heating systems and electrical appliances as businesses make spaces more comfortable for employees and customers and to keep equipment and other business assets safe and operational. Winter weather also tends to be lower in humidity, and the dry air creates the perfect conditions for a small spark to turn into a significant hazard.

We enter the new year eager to tackle goals and make the most of the year ahead. While most commercial property owners are aware of fire risks, the importance of fire safety inspections during winter months may not have made it to the top of New Year's resolutions. It is important to remain vigilant for the rest of winter to prevent fires and other hazards that come with Oregon's winter weather. These conditions can affect fire safety systems, emergency exits, and fire equipment.

### **Means of Egress**

2022 Oregon Fire Code section 1032.3 requires that means of egress shall be free from obstructions that would prevent its use, including the accumulation of snow and ice. A typical means of egress is the safe path of travel from inside your building to an exterior public way. Means of egress paths exist in all occupied buildings – think corridors, stairways, exit signs and doors – and are designed to create safe avenues of travel. These pathways provide a clear, unobstructed route, but they often extend beyond the front door to include steps, sidewalks, and alleyways. Snow and ice buildup can make these key exit routes unsafe, so it's important to keep them in mind during winter weather. Building owners are responsible for keeping all pathways safe and accessible, which can be especially challenging during Oregon's unpredictable winter conditions.

Whether snow is falling or has been hurled toward a building by a plow, its exterior exits could be blocked by snow buildup, making exit doors difficult to open. The ground level can be easier to pay attention to but do not neglect the roof where it can often be a forgotten area where the accumulation of snow and ice can impact roof access and/or equipment access.

# CODES CORNER

## Fire Hydrants

Maintaining a 3-foot clear space for fire hydrants is a year-round requirement, but snow accumulation is a seasonal challenge that can delay access and working space for firefighters if not maintained. Oregon Fire Code Section 507.5.5 says a 3-foot (914mm) clear space shall be maintained around the circumference of fire hydrants, except as otherwise required or approved.

- Clear a 3-foot circumference from the perimeter
- This includes snow and ice
- Create a path from the hydrant to the street



## JOIN THE OSFM SMOKE ALARM INSTALLATION PROGRAM

Is your agency interested in joining the OSFM's Smoke Alarm Installation Program? The program provides smoke alarms to Oregon fire agencies to install in homes that are not adequately protected.

There are several opportunities to learn more about the program during free webinars. Participants will learn about program eligibility and requirements, smoke alarms and installation information, project planning and ideas, and safety materials available to order. The free one-hour live webinar training is required for fire agencies who wish to participate in the program. Click the dates to register.

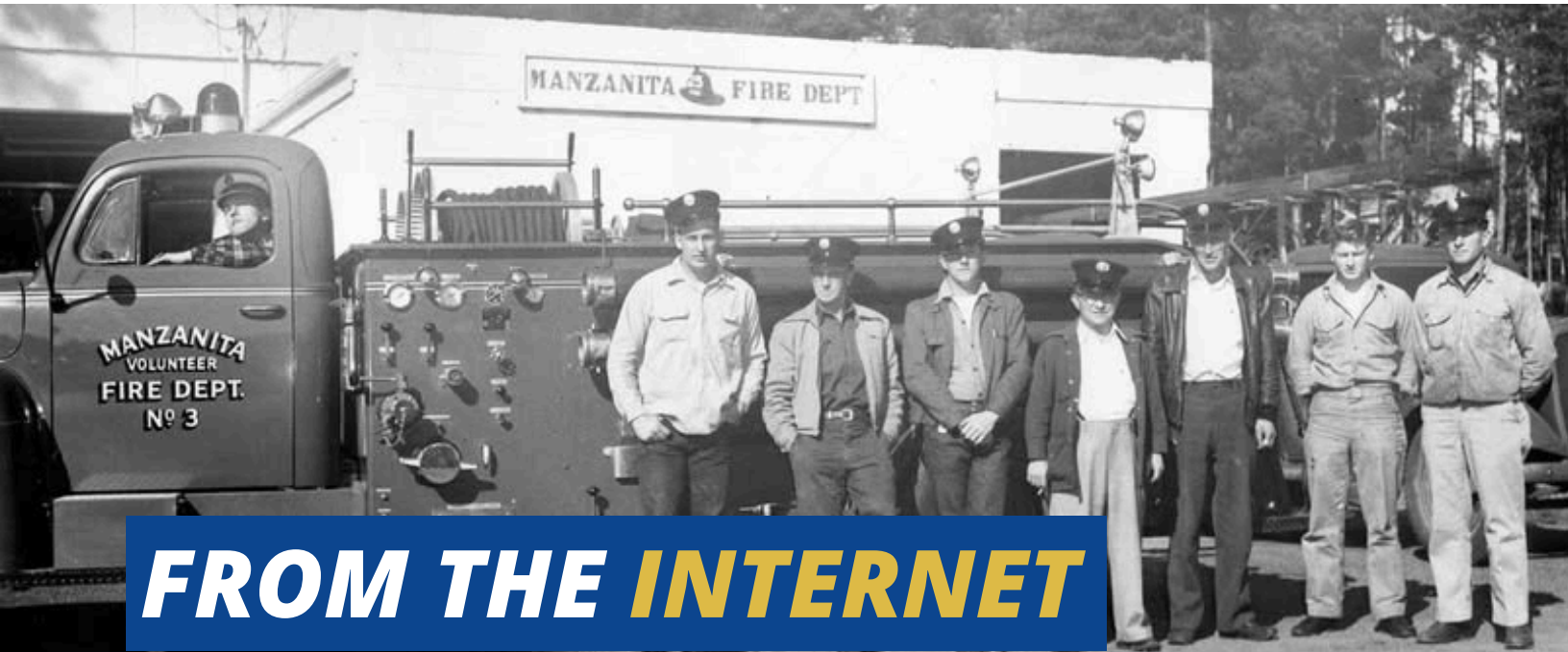


[February 13, 2025](#)

[March 13, 2025](#)

[April 10, 2025](#)

If your department needs training at a different time, please contact us for alternate scheduling at 503-934-8228.



## FROM THE INTERNET

Did you know Manzanita had its own fire department until 2008? That's when voters created the Nehalem Bay Fire and Rescue District. Check out the photo from the old days—a photo of the original Manzanita Fire Department Station, which now serves as the police station and equipment hub for the Emergency Volunteer Corps of Nehalem Bay. [READ MORE HERE](#)

## APPRECIATION DAY

On January 27, Oregon honored its firefighters with Oregon Firefighter Appreciation Day. The day was established in 2007, when the Oregon legislature passed House Joint Resolution 25. Stayton Fire was honored with doughnuts from the local police department. Yum.



January 27 is a reminder of the risks they face and the sacrifices they make every day to keep us safe.

To every firefighter, from wildland crews to urban responders: Thank you for your courage, expertise, and selflessness.





# 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](mailto:michelle.vold@osfm.oregon.gov))



# CONTACT US

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

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