

Oregon conflagration impact data supports need for mitigation plans

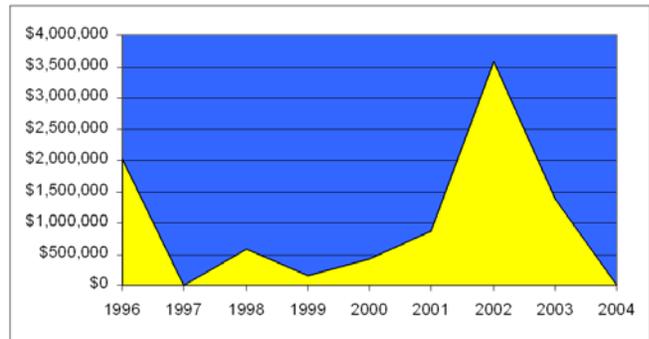
For the 2005 wildfire season, many communities are actively engaged in reducing their wildfire risks through Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). Historically, the Oregon Conflagration Act has steadily gained use as a measure to fight catastrophic wildfires. Increasing costs, use of mobilization, and limited resources emphasize the need for community accountability through mitigation plans to reduce the threat of wildfires. Since 1996 Oregon conflagration costs have exceeded \$9 million. Oregon conflagrations have occurred as early as May and as late as September with peak activity during July and August. While many natural resource agencies cite human causes in wildfire, Oregon conflagrations since 1996 are predominantly lightning-caused.

Oregon's Conflagration Act, ORS 476.510, was developed in 1940 as a civil defense measure. The Act has parameters for use:

- It is used only when fires threaten life and/or structures,
- May be invoked only by the Governor,
- Mobilizes structural firefighters through Incident Management Teams,
- Provides for reimbursing resources.

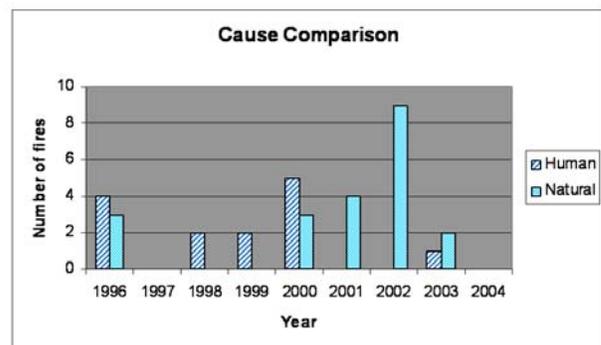
Through an initiative originating with the Governor's Fire Service Policy Council, current policy motivates communities to create CWPPs by laying out expectations of unprotected communities. Prior to a request for invoking the Conflagration Act, counties should:

- Have a CWPP,
- Adopt construction standards requiring reduction of fire risk and structural ignitability, including Goal 4 for fire siting standards for structures and roads.
- Clarify language on county tax statements regarding forest patrol assessments by defining this assessment does not include structural protection.



**Conflagration Costs
1996 to 2004**

The fire service plays a key role in the development of CWPPs and is encouraged by the Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) to provide CWPP direction uniquely appropriate for the structural fire service. Local fire departments have the best knowledge on what is needed to reduce local structural risk. OSFM provides wildfire program tools such as conflagration data, guidance and references. These are available for fire departments involved with CWPPs. Oregon fire departments are encouraged to share their ideas and successes to benefit departments statewide. More conflagration impact data may be viewed at: http://egov.oregon.gov/OOHS/SFM/Conflagration_Data.shtml.



**Cause Comparison
1996 to 2004**

For information on wildfire mitigation projects and community wildfire prevention planning resources, contact Donna Disch, 503-373-1540 ext. 275 or email Donna.Disch@state.or.us.

WUI Resource 1 -- Excerpt from the August 2005 *Gated Wye* http://egov.oregon.gov/OOHS/SFM/Comm_Ed_Gated_Wye.shtml