



OREGON

Kate Brown, Governor

Oregon State Police
Office of State Fire Marshal

3565 Trelstad Ave. SE
Salem, OR 97317-9614

503-373-1540

Fax 503-373-1825

E-mail: rudy.owens@osp.oregon.gov

www.oregon.gov/osp/sfm

May 4, 2020 For Immediate Release

Contact Oregon Department of Forestry:
Tom Fields, 503-945-7440, office or 503-983-8897, cell

Contact Office of State Fire Marshal:
Rudy Owens, 503-934-8217, office or 971-332-0052, cell

Contact Office of Emergency Management:
Paula Fasano Negele, 503-378-2127, office or 503-871-8689, cell

Wildfire Awareness Month Focusses on Making Homes Safe from Wildfire

May is Wildfire Awareness Month in Oregon, and federal, state and firefighting agencies are encouraging Oregonians to make sure their homes and property are protected from wildfire.

The Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal and Keep Oregon Green, in collaboration with Oregon forest protective associations, the Office of Emergency Management and federal wildland agencies, are taking this opportunity to promote defensible space around homes before fire strikes this summer. With many Oregonians spending more time at home because of statewide efforts to control the spread of COVID-19, residents can use the coming weeks to reduce risks and make their homes and communities safer.

“The roof is one of the most critical parts of the house when it comes to wildfire protection,” says Oregon State Fire Marshal Jim Walker. “Embers can collect and ignite on the roof, in gutters and enter unscreened openings around the house. Non-combustible roofing material is preferred. Regardless of the construction, please keep your roofs, gutters and eaves clear of all leaves, pine needles and other flammable debris.”

To reduce the risk, fire officials suggest removing dead vegetation a minimum of 30 feet around homes and other structures. In most cases, trees and healthy plants do not need to be removed. However, trees should be pruned and grass kept short and green to keep fire on the ground and more manageable by fire crews. Maintain a five-foot fire-free area closest to the home using nonflammable landscaping material and fire resistant plants.

“Defensible space is a property’s first line of defense against wildfire,” says Oregon Department of Forestry Fire Prevention Coordinator Tom Fields. “Creating and maintaining defensible space around homes can improve your property’s likelihood of surviving a wildfire. Having defensible space also makes it safer for firefighters who may have to defend someone’s home.”

Homeowners should also consider access issues for large fire trucks. Long driveways should be at least 12 feet wide, have 10 feet of vegetation clearance from the centerline out, and about 14 feet overhead. Large vehicle turnaround areas are critical for your safety as well as firefighter safety.

Should a fire occur near a community, Oregon Office of Emergency Management Director Andrew Phelps encourages residents to be prepared if an evacuation is necessary. “Wildfires can come without warning and move quickly, so residents need to prepare now in case they have to leave their home,” Phelps said. “Make sure to put together a ‘Go Kit,’ register for emergency notification systems in your community and make a plan where your family will go and how you will stay in contact if evacuated.”

It is the homeowner’s responsibility to protect their homes by building defensible space. For more information, visit the websites for the [Office of State Fire Marshal](#), the [Office of Emergency Management](#), [Keep Oregon Green](#) and the [Oregon Department of Forestry](#), or call your nearest [ODF or forest protective association office](#).

Additional information on preparing for wildfires can be found on the [Ready.gov website](#).

-###-