



OREGON STATE FIRE MARSHAL

THE GATED WYE

MAY 2025



Spark Awareness, Not Wildfire.

MAY IS WILDFIRE AWARENESS MONTH

May means warmer weather and summer around the corner. May is also designated as Wildfire Awareness Month in Oregon.

The Oregon State Fire Marshal and other state agencies and partners are asking Oregonians to take this month to prepare for wildfire and focus on things like creating defensible space and brushing up on fire prevention tips. **[READ MORE ON PAGE 2.](#)**

OSFM'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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WILDFIRE AWARENESS MONTH KICKS OFF **MAY 1**: SPREAD THE WORD

Last year, Oregon had one of the most destructive wildfire seasons in its history—1.9 million acres burned, communities were tested, and lives were changed. But amid the devastation, there were also stories of resilience: homes that stood strong because they had defensible space.

As May marks Wildfire Awareness Month, the Oregon State Fire Marshal is urging Oregonians to act now. With the possibility of another challenging fire season ahead, preparing your home could make all the difference.

“For the last several years we’ve been proactively working to boost staffing at local fire agencies, modernizing response equipment, and investing in wildfire resiliency projects across the state,” Oregon State Fire Marshal Mariana Ruiz-Temple said. “But we can’t do it alone. We need every Oregonian to rise to this challenge. Creating defensible space around your home is one of the most effective ways to protect your property and your community.”

Start with small changes that have a big impact:

- Space and prune trees to prevent fire from climbing into canopies.
- Remove leaves, pine needles, bark mulch, and other debris within 100 feet of structures or up to your property line.
- Clean roofs and gutters of flammable debris.
- Move combustible materials—like mulch and firewood—away from your home.
- Keep plants trimmed and clear of dead material, especially near the house.
- Avoid planting directly under eaves; leave at least a five-foot buffer.

For a detailed guide on how to create defensible space, check out www.oregondefensiblespace.org.

As you clean up your yard, be mindful about disposal. Consider chipping, composting, or recycling. If burning is necessary, always follow local rules. Debris burns that get out of control are the leading cause of human-caused wildfires in Oregon.

Find tips, resources, and more at the OSFM's Wildfire Awareness Month webpage or www.preventwildfires.oregon.gov.

BIGFOOT BOXES SHIPPED OFF TO OREGON FIRE SERVICE IN APRIL

To get the fire service ready for Wildfire Awareness Month and to share the messages of wildfire preparedness and prevention, the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Fire Life Safety Education Division sent 147 bigfoot boxes to local fire agencies across Oregon.

Inside the boxes are materials like coloring sheets, rack cards about debris burning, information about evacuation levels, stickers, a banner, and other fun items to be used at events to engage the community.

In early April, staff assembled and shipped the boxes. Local fire agencies can order educational materials from our website. [Click here](#) or scan the QR code.



WELCOME TO THE OSFM TEAM!



Mike Cook brings a wealth of experience to his new role as regional mobilization coordinator for Southeast Oregon. Born and raised in Merlin, Oregon, Mike is a 10-year Navy veteran with a strong background in fire service leadership.

He began his fire career with the Creswell Volunteer Fire Department, later part of South Lane County Fire & Rescue, and supported numerous combination and volunteer departments across the state. Most recently, he served as fire chief of Chiloquin Fire & Rescue for 10 years.

Mike lives in Chiloquin—just 25 miles south of Crater Lake National Park—with his wife Leslie and their five children. Welcome to the team!



2025 WILDFIRE SEASON STAFFING GRANT RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

A small grant with big impact, helping protect Oregonians when it matters most. The Oregon State Fire Marshal announced the 2025 Wildfire Season Staffing Grant recipients. Now in its fourth year, this funding helps local fire agencies, many relying on volunteer crews, bring on extra firefighters during wildfire season. These seasonal staff boost emergency response in 200 agencies across the state, from wildfire calls to everyday emergencies.

“The OSFM wildfire season staffing grants have greatly improved our response capabilities and those in neighboring districts,” Coburg Fire District Chief Chad Minter said. “With this funding, we can staff a wildland engine daily during fire season with two additional firefighters who respond to all fires and support five nearby districts. When not on calls, the crew assists with recruitment, training, outreach, and prevention. This staffing makes up 50% of our rapid response and is essential to keeping fires small. These grants are a smart investment.”

Local fire agencies were eligible to apply for up to \$35,000 to increase staffing levels during the fire season. Each summer, this grant adds more than 1,500 firefighters across Oregon. The Oregon legislature allocated \$6 million to the program this year.

“The Wildfire Season Staffing Grant is one of our most impactful tools to help local fire agencies respond to emergencies faster, protect communities, and support each other through mutual aid,” Oregon State Fire Marshal Mariana Ruiz-Temple said. “We’re thankful to our legislators for continuing to invest in the safety and resilience of our communities.”

Since 2022, the grant has proven to be a vital resource in increasing preparedness, response capabilities, and overall community safety during Oregon’s increasingly challenging wildfire seasons.

A list of awardees and more information about the Oregon State Fire Marshal’s grant program can be found [here](#).



REGISTRATION NOW OPEN TASK FORCE LEADER SYMPOSIUM

Registration is open for the 2025 OSFM Task Force Leader Symposium at Seven Feathers Resort in Canyonville, Oregon. The event will run from Tuesday, May 20, at 1:30 p.m. through Wednesday, May 21, at 3 p.m.

This symposium is designed for task force and strike team leaders and trainees, offering critical training and valuable sessions to enhance leadership skills and preparedness. Participants will have the opportunity to engage in discussions and workshops on a range of topics, including:

- Operations: structure prep & the structural protection plan
- OSFM expectations
- Rangeland Fire Protection Associations
- Triage & mapping tools
- Fire season forecast
- Safety: incident within an incident focus
- And more!

Please complete your registration by **Monday, May 5, 2025**.

Why Attend?

While this symposium does not offer certification, it is an excellent opportunity for task force leaders to gain essential skills, share experiences, and enhance their leadership abilities. The OSFM thanks task force leaders for your dedication and time commitment, both during and outside of incident responses.

Don't miss the chance to be part of this important training event.

[Register here](#) or scan the QR code to the right.



GET COMFORTABLE WITH **DEFENSIBLE SPACE.**

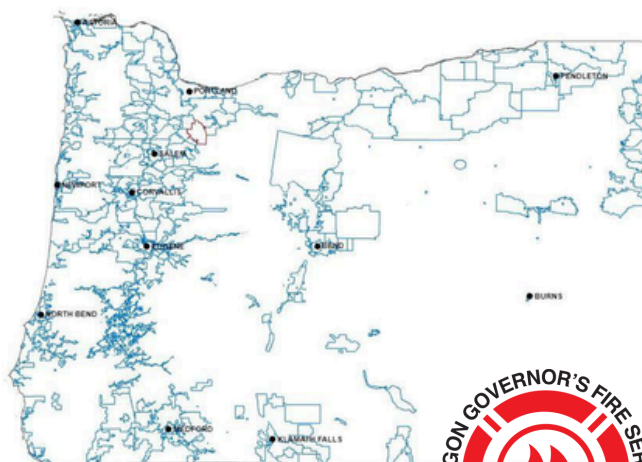
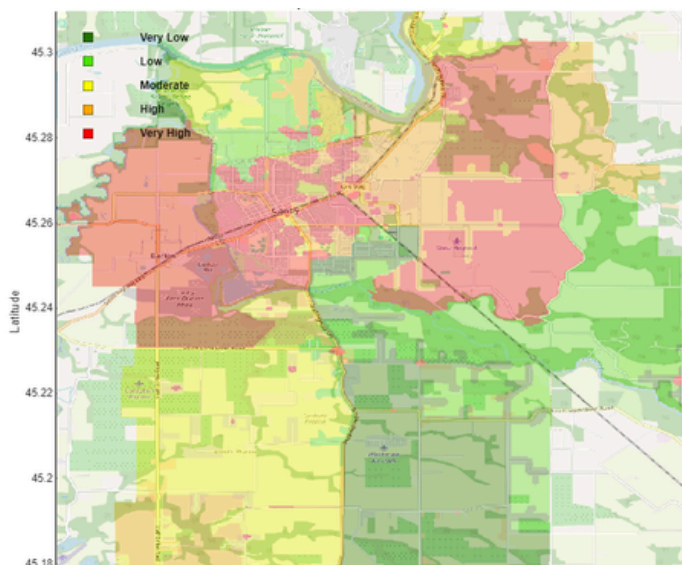


FIVE SPRING PROJECTS TO CREATE DEFENSIBLE SPACE:

- 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.**](#)





OSFM INTRODUCES OrCRAFT

We're excited to share some big news from the Oregon State Fire Marshal: introducing OrCRAFT, the Oregon Community Risk Assessment Fire Tool! This new, easy-to-use web-based tool is now available free of charge to all fire agencies across the state.

OrCRAFT was developed by our Analytics & Intelligence Unit to help departments, especially smaller and volunteer-based ones, better understand and plan for the unique risks in their communities. By bringing together comprehensive fire risk data in one place, OrCRAFT makes it easier for agencies to assess local hazards, prioritize needs, and build stronger, more resilient communities.

"This kind of data-driven service can be expensive and difficult to access," said State Fire Marshal Ruiz-Temple. "We're excited to provide OrCRAFT free of charge to support all fire agencies in building safer, more resilient communities. This is more than just a dashboard – it's a strategic investment in Oregon's safety."

Built with direct input from members of Oregon's fire service, OrCRAFT aligns with national best practices, including NFPA 1300, and is designed to help agencies complete community risk assessments, the first step in creating an effective community risk reduction (CRR) plan. As we roll out version 1, we'll review requests and suggestions for enhancements every six months and regularly implement updates to ensure the tool continues to meet your needs.

OrCRAFT saves time and resources and empowers departments to focus where it matters most: protecting lives and property. This tool was endorsed by the Governor's Fire Service Policy Council in late April.

Coming soon: In mid-May, we'll be sending out an email to all fire agencies with a link to register for a training session on how to get started with OrCRAFT. We can't wait to see how this new tool supports your important work!

OREGON REGIONAL HAZMAT TEAMS BUSY IN APRIL

In April, Oregon State Fire Marshal's regional hazardous materials emergency response teams played a key role in keeping communities safe during several high-risk incidents across the state.

Hazmat Response to Harney County Flooding

Later in the month, Hazmat Team 14 supported Burns Fire Department following flooding in Harney County. Two technicians responded to a property with commercial vehicles and equipment that had been affected by floodwaters.

Crews placed absorbent pads and reinforced containment booms. Over two hours, they monitored air quality using gas meters and checked pH levels in the water. No hazardous materials were detected.

Aircraft Crash Response in Coos County

Coos Bay Hazmat Team 15 was called to assist North Bend Fire Department after a small passenger aircraft crashed into a waterway near the Southwest Regional Airport.

Though patients had been transported and the scene stabilized by the time Team 15 arrived, the hazmat crew provided on-site support and consultation. With 400 gallons of jet fuel onboard the aircraft, responders used absorbent booms to help prevent a fuel leak.

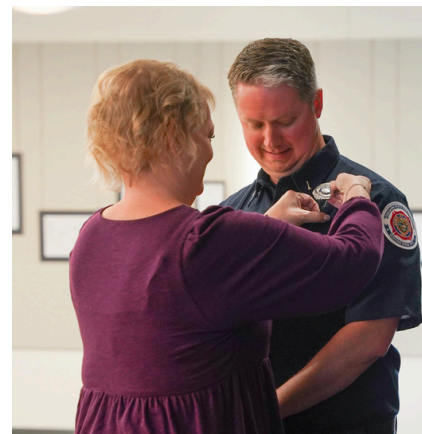
The incident demonstrated the importance of regional coordination and quick action by emergency partners.

Unknown Powder Exposure

In Mid-April Hazmat Team 5 Linn Benton responded in support of Newport fire and police concerning two people who were exposed to an unknown powder from a suspicious package.

Hazmat Team 5 coordinated the response effort with local police and the FBI. The team provided medical and decontamination guidance and assisted with hazard characterization of the unknown powder. The incident is under investigation by law enforcement.





TWO SWORN IN AT APRIL ALL-STAFF

Oregon State Fire Marshal Mariana Ruiz-Temple swore in two new members at the agency's April all-staff meeting. Dylan Webb and Mike Cook received their badges and signed their official oaths. The pair joined the Oregon State Fire Marshal as regional mobilization coordinators. Congratulations!

OFMA CONFERENCE: REGISTER TODAY

The Oregon Fire Marshals Association will host its 2025 Annual Conference May 19–22 at The Riverhouse in Bend.

The event will feature sessions on fire safety and prevention, networking opportunities with fire service professionals across the state, and the OFMA business meeting and member voting, including proposed bylaw amendments.

Conference highlights include:

- Educational sessions on fire prevention and safety
- Networking with peers and partners
- OFMA business meeting and leadership updates

Discounted lodging is available at The Riverhouse. Early booking is encouraged.

To register or learn more, visit <https://ofma32.wildapricot.org/event-6125592>.

The OFMA encourages all members and partners to attend and take part in shaping the future of fire prevention in Oregon.

SHARING MY STORY

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

By Matt Laas

May is National Mental Health Awareness month. Since the death of my oldest daughter by suicide nearly two months ago, I've ruminated on how I should approach this month. I knew it was coming, and I procrastinated on how to promote this awareness campaign. Along with resources, I'm going to follow the lead of the National Alliance on Mental Illness and share some of my story.

Addison was a 35-year-old creative, kind, hilarious, stubborn, and wickedly intelligent young woman. She was an early, voracious reader, and had a witty and worldly perspective beyond her years. She was the big sister, confidant, and mentor of her many younger siblings. Her empathy toward others, and commitment to those she loved was unmistakable. She experienced bouts of depression over the years but seemed to manage them through professional help and connection with her wide cast of friends and family. She was a cancer survivor and demonstrated incredible resilience through treatment and recovery. For the last few months, she had been experiencing a more depressive period. Yet, no one saw the extent to which she was suffering. Her death was a devastating, bewildering shock to everyone who knew and loved her. As the Oregon spring blooms and erupts in smells, sights, and the cacophony of life, we can only ask, "what if..." to so many questions.

For some time, I've been diving into fire service mental health and suicide prevention. I'm not a clinician or a mental health researcher. I'm an old firefighter with a passion for knowledge and a mission to be a better person, father, husband, friend, and advocate for fire service health and safety. As I reflect on my career of stress coping, I checked most of the boxes for the productive and not-so-productive strategies. My primary means of stress management was movement: functional exercise, running, hiking, skiing, continual house projects, shuttling kids, cooking, cleaning...you know, life. At work, I took operational readiness seriously with meaningful training. Although I perceived myself as a mellow firefighter, engineer, and lieutenant around the station, others might say I didn't have a whole lot of chill.

I didn't really see this until my bout with cancer, at which time I was forced to slow down. There is perspective to be gained from mandatory chill time. I overdid it physically a couple of times. There were consequences. I spiked a high fever for several days and set my recovery back. "I may be dumb, but I'm not stupid," as the quote goes from my home state of Missouri; I listened to my body more carefully stayed below that physical threshold, sometimes just barely. After treatment and recovery from throat cancer, my first line assignment was on April 1, 2020. Yep, that April.

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Around that time, my teenage/early adult kids and I had great conversations about our family over the last 20 years. We talked about what life was like with a dad on 24-hour shifts, then as a single dad with three young kids and a day assignment in training. We dove into the blending of our family with my incredible wife and stepson. While describing how hard I worked to keep us afloat in those years after the divorce, I felt those late nights and early mornings, grinding to keep everything above water.

Trying to be present and provide for them while working my tail off, I'm proud of how I managed those responsibilities and connections. While recounting my perspective during that time, I teared up and cried. It was a profound moment of recognition for me how uncomfortable that was for them. They had never seen me cry; it was uncharted territory for them. They had never truly seen me vulnerable. I'd been there in support of everyone, for their entire lives, with lots of tears, fears, and joys. But I'd not modeled the most human expression of emotion and vulnerability. It was a cathartic moment for all of us and I'm grateful.

I encourage all my fire service brothers and sisters to reflect on the impact your work has on those you love. I wouldn't change my chosen career for anything. I served on the line for nearly three decades and I'm proud to have done so with empathy and compassion for those suffering, ill, injured, and in greatest need. Somewhere in us, we hold that suffering. It doesn't go away; we just manage it the best we can in the moment. I encourage us all to lean into honest conversations with those we love. It doesn't have to be perfect. It can simply start with connection. Demonstrate some fallibility, some vulnerability, a willingness to acknowledge that they have been with you on this journey. Lean on the resources available to you; mental health professionals, peer supporters, 988, EAP programs.

- First Responder Center for Excellence
- Lines for Life
- NAMI
- Oregon Fire Service Health and Safety Collaborative
- Hope Out of Darkness: A Guide to First Responder Wellness by Dena Ali, BC with Ralieggh (NC) FD and Behavioral Health Program Manager with the First Responder Center for Excellence. It's a well-structured, comprehensive guide to mental health from a firefighter for firefighters.

If you made it through my thoughts on Mental Health Awareness month, I hope you take some small action. If not for you, do it for your family, for your crew members, for their families. We all rely on each other to survive and thrive.



IN MEMORIAM: CHIEF BOB SCHNOOR

The Oregon fire service community mourns the loss of Chief Bob Schnoor, a lifelong servant and leader whose legacy will continue to inspire generations.

Born in 1949 in Prineville, Bob graduated from Crook County High School in 1967 and went on to serve in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1969 to 1975. He married Valerie Rockwood in 1970 and later became the beloved owner of Bob's Market, earning the title of "Master Butcher" from the community he cherished.

Bob joined the Prineville Fire Department in 1975, beginning a remarkable 40-year career in fire service. He served as a volunteer for 10 years and ultimately became fire chief for Crook County Fire & Rescue, a role he held for 23 years until his retirement in 2012. His dedication to fire service followed a family tradition, as his father also volunteered at Prineville Fire starting in 1942.

Known for his humility, integrity, and unwavering sense of duty, Bob believed heroism wasn't about accolades, but about showing up for your community each day. He lived by the motto shared by his father at the Elks Lodge: "Best people on earth live here."

Chief Schnoor will be remembered not only for his leadership and service, but for his humor, kindness, and the deep camaraderie he fostered within the fire service. He was a mentor, a friend, and a true embodiment of community spirit.

He leaves behind a loving family and a legacy of dedication—as a husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother, and fellow firefighter. Bob Schnoor's impact will be felt for years to come, and he will be deeply missed.

REGISTER NOW FOR 2025 SERC/LEPC CONFERENCE



Join us for the 2025 SERC/LEPC conference, May 19-22 at the Chinook Winds Casino Resort in Lincoln City! Hosted by the Oregon State Fire Marshal, this year's event covers the full spectrum of emergency planning, from historical lessons to future preparedness. Through expert-led discussions, hands-on training, and a tabletop exercise, you'll gain actionable skills to enhance your emergency response capabilities.

Designed for LEPCs, first responders, emergency managers, and industry professionals, the conference features sessions on legal frameworks, hazardous materials response, risk communication, and funding opportunities. Topics include lessons from the Bhopal disaster, lithium-ion battery hazards, and strengthening planning. Don't miss this chance to collaborate, learn, and improve community preparedness—register today!



OREGON NERIS+ UPDATE

Significant progress is happening behind the scenes as we build the foundation for onboarding agencies into NERIS+ and begin evaluating the Entity and Core Incident modules in a test environment. Below is a timeline of the NERIS+ rollout.

June – July 2025: Build the draft NERIS+ core incident report form in the state repository.

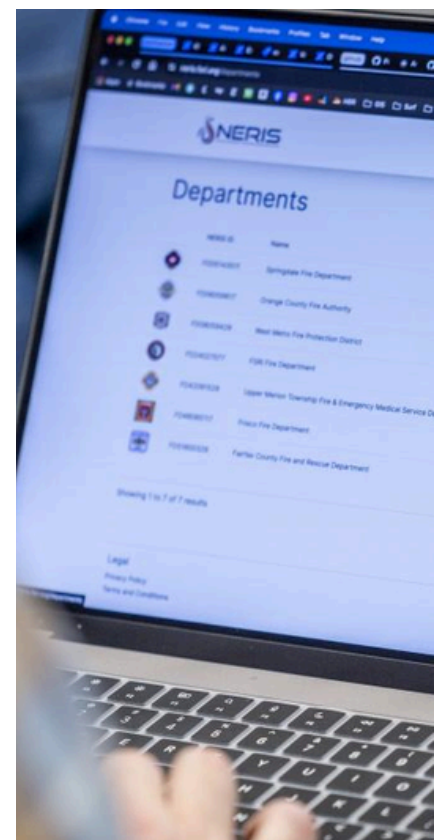
July – August 2025: Agencies will update their profiles in the state repository to align with NERIS standards (Entity Module).

August – September 2025: The OSFM will transmit Oregon agencies' NERIS profiles (Entity Module) to the National NERIS system.

November 2025: Training sign-ups and scheduling are released for the NERIS+ core incident report form.

December 2025: Agencies will receive training to navigate the new NERIS+ state reporting system.

Please continue to report your incidents using NFIRS. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact the Analytics & Intelligence Unit at osfm.data@osfm.oregon.gov.



FOCUS ON LITHIUM-ION BATTERY SAFETY

Lithium-ion batteries are in many everyday items—phones, laptops, e-bikes, scooters, power tools, and more. But if damaged, overcharged, or misused, they can overheat, catch fire, or even explode.

May is also National Electrical Safety Month, and lithium-ion battery safety is a key focus. The NFPA now has a new safety standard: NFPA 800 – Battery Safety.

Stay Safe with Lithium-Ion Batteries

- Purchase batteries and chargers that are listed by a nationally recognized testing laboratory
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions, including instructions on how to charge
- Only use manufacturer-approved batteries and chargers
- Stop charging once the device is fully charged
- Keep devices away from items that can catch fire, including bedding and couches.
- Never charge devices near doors or hallways that may block exits

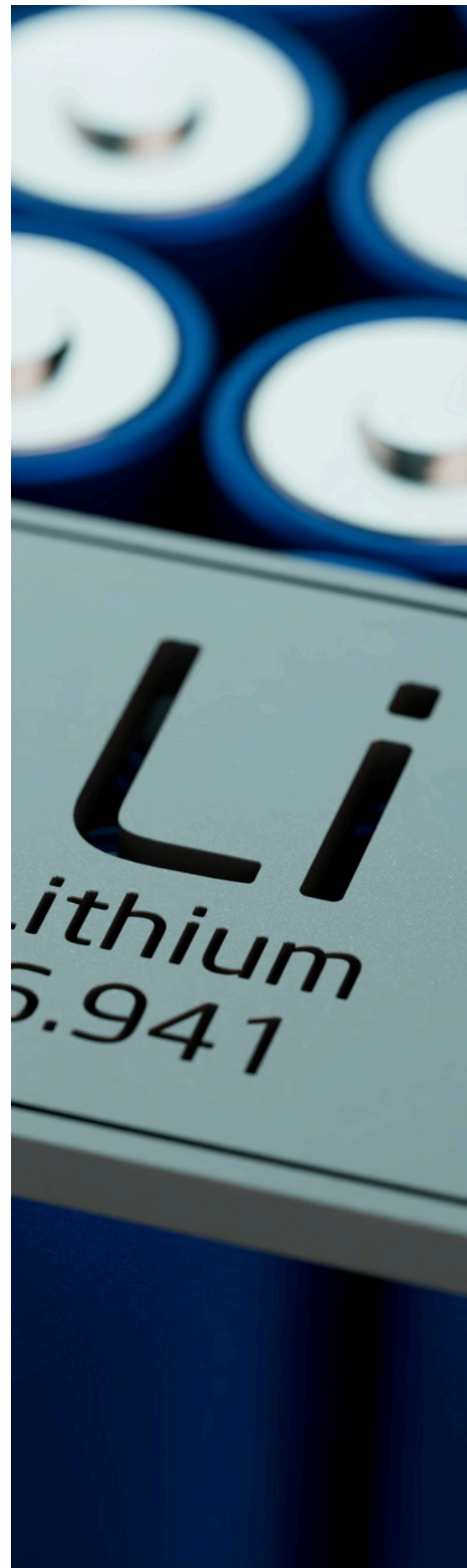
Warning Signs of Battery Trouble

- Change in the battery color
- Sweet electrical burning odor
- Noises or leaking coming from the battery
- Change in the battery or device shape
- Smoke coming from the battery

Recycle safely and never throw lithium-ion batteries in the trash or curbside recycling. Instead:

- Drop them off at participating stores like Lowe's, Home Depot, Staples, or UPS.
- Visit Call2Recycle.org or the [OSFM website](#) for local recycling options.
- Tape battery terminals and place them in a clear plastic bag before dropping off.

The Oregon State Fire Marshal offers a free fire safety brochure on lithium-ion batteries—printed in English and Spanish, and digital in five languages. Order for community events [here](#).





OSFM HOSTS BATTERY EMERGENCY RESPONSE CLASSES IN APRIL

In April, the Oregon State Fire Marshal held three battery emergency response considerations trainings for members of the Oregon fire service. The two-hour class was hosted at Bend Fire & Rescue, Sublimity Fire District, and McKenzie Fire & Rescue, reaching about 40 firefighters.

The training covers critical topics to help responders stay safe and informed during battery-related incidents, including:

- Electric vehicle fire and extrication considerations
- Personal mobility devices (e-scooters, e-bikes, etc.)
- Common personal electronic devices
- Battery energy storage systems (BESS)
- Firefighter safety during battery emergencies

This training is designed to fit easily into standard drill schedules and is available to fire agencies statewide.

Interested in hosting a training?

Contact Rick Heuchert at richard.heuchert@osfm.oregon.gov.

**SIGN UP
TODAY!**

COMING THIS SUMMER! **RISK REDUCTION TRAINING KITS**

Exciting news for Oregon fire agencies! The OSFM risk reduction kit is a brand-new resource designed to help you teach fire safety in your community.

The kits are centered around cooking, heating, and electrical safety.

EACH KIT INCLUDES:

Visuals, props, and a presenter's guide for hands-on fire safety education fire safety topics. Each kit comes with engaging tools, like mini cooking pans, extension cords, chimney sweep tools, oven mitts, and more!

These kits have tailored lessons for all ages, including adults, young adults, youth, and seniors.

WHO'S ELIGIBLE?

All Oregon fire agencies with an FDID or DCIN

HOW TO GET YOURS

To receive a kit, agencies must attend a mandatory three-hour, in-person regional training. These trainings will ensure you know exactly how to use your kit effectively in your community.

TRAINING LOCATIONS & SIGN-UP

Spots are open for up to 30 agencies per regional training session (unlimited spots at OSFM HQ in Salem).

Sign up today! **Scan the QR code** to find a training near you and to register.



Let's work together to reduce fire risks and make Oregon safer!

Questions? Contact: Laura.Chaffey@osfm.oregon.gov

STATE FIRE MARSHAL HOSTS 'TAKE YOUR CHILD TO WORK' DAY



Take Your Child to Work Day was in full swing at our agency headquarters!

On April 24, 19 curious and energetic kids joined us to explore how we work to keep our communities safe. From hands-on demos to behind-the-scenes tours, they got a glimpse into the dedication and teamwork that fuels our mission every day.

We're proud to inspire the next generation of leaders, protectors, and public servants.

A huge thank you to our staff who shared about their work and to **Keizer Fire District** for letting us borrow their water tender.

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 below to register.



[May 8, 2025](#)

[June 12, 2025](#)

[July 17, 2025](#)

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



NOW AVAILABLE: SMOKING FIRE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN KITS

The Oregon State Fire Marshal, in partnership with the Oregon Health Authority's SmokeFree Oregon initiative, is launching the 2025 Smoking Fire Prevention Campaign—and kits are now available to order. Designed for use during the high-risk summer months (June–August), the campaign equips fire service and public health partners with materials to educate the public and reduce smoking-related fire incidents.

WHY IT MATTERS:

From 2019 to 2023, Oregon saw 6,820 fires caused by smoking materials—with nearly 4,000 occurring during the summer months. Of those, 1,268 fires were in single- and multi-family dwellings, and more than 70% of summer smoking-related fires were classified as vegetation or outdoor fires. These fires led to \$7.5 million in estimated losses.

WHAT'S IN THE KIT:

- Data summaries (2019–2023) on smoking fire incidents and fatalities
- Bilingual prevention brochures for smoking and home oxygen use
- “Put it Out. All the Way. Every Time.” posters and rack cards (with QR links to safety surveys and quit resources)
- Coasters, stickers, and window clings for public distribution
- Materials available in English and Spanish

SUGGESTED USES:

- Distribute coasters and posters to local restaurants
- Share educational materials at public events
- Collaborate with local tobacco prevention coordinators
- Promote quit resources and community risk reduction

Order your kit now and join the effort to reduce smoking-related fires across Oregon this summer. Order [here](#) or scan the QR code.



PROTECT HOMES IN YOUR COMMUNITY INSIDE AND OUT

From home fires to wildfires, the Oregon State Fire Marshal offers essential programs to help you protect your community year-round.

Your agency can:

- Become a **defensible space assessor** to help homes withstand wildfire
- Participate in the **Smoke Alarm Installation Program** to protect the people inside



SCAN



Defensible Space Program

SCAN



Smoke Alarm Installation Program

Empower your agency to enhance fire safety—inside and out.

GET STARTED TODAY!



CODES CORNER

In August 2019, a massive fire tore through a Salem pallet manufacturing company, causing millions in damage. In May 2024, a Silverton pallet-fueled fire destroyed a building, and just a few months later, a three-alarm blaze in Portland collapsed part of a business and impacted nearby power lines. These incidents highlight the fire risks of idle pallets, common in warehouses and businesses.

While pallets are critical to a business operation, improper storage creates a significant fire hazard. The 2022 Oregon Fire Code (OFC) has requirements for idle pallet storage to mitigate these risks. This article simplifies key concepts from the fire code and NFPA 13.

OFC pallet requirements vary based on their storage location and method. For example, requirements for pallets stored outdoors are in general storage Section 315.7, while requirements for pallet manufacturing and recycling centers must comply with Section 2810. This article focuses on idle pallets stored in a building, typically associated with high-piled combustible storage found in Chapter 32.

Understanding High-Piled Storage

Chapter 32 is for “high-piled” combustible storage, defined as piles over 12 feet tall for commodity Classes I through IV (measured to the top) and over six feet high for products considered high hazard, including idle pallets. Indoor piles of pallets up to six feet need to meet miscellaneous storage requirements in OFC Section 315.3.5 and NFPA 13.

Next, inspectors should identify the pallet material—wood or plastic—as it affects fire risk and protection needs. OFC Section 3204 references the need for a NFPA 13, Chapter 20 sprinkler system based on the material and how the pallets are arranged. As with all inspections of this type, the fire code official’s primary responsibility is to ensure that the approved design, in a setting that is inherently dynamic, has not been exceeded.

Wood pallets are highly combustible and require sprinkler systems per NFPA 13, Section 20.17.1. These typically use large flow rate (K-Factor) sprinklers designed specifically for high-piled storage. Verify the system matches the approved design. For smaller operations like grocery stores and small manufacturing, NFPA 13 allows up to four wood pallet stacks (6 feet high or less), each separated by 8 feet and 25 feet from other storage. These areas need “Ordinary Hazard Group 2” protection, so check the hydraulic plate on the riser for a minimum 0.2 gpm/ft² density. Note that this “exception” is like the miscellaneous storage requirements mentioned earlier.

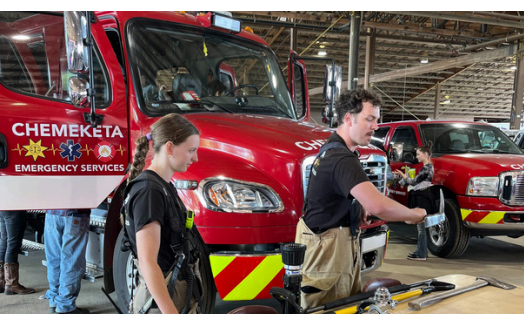
Plastic pallets pose even greater risks unless labeled UL 2335 or FM 4996, which allows treatment as wood pallets. Unreinforced plastic pallets (thinner, porous) are required to be permanently marked by the manufacturer and are less hazardous than reinforced plastic pallets (denser, with metal/fiberglass bands). Unmarked plastic pallets are assumed to be reinforced with a greater fuel load.

Plastic stacks are protected in accordance with NFPA 13, Section 20.17.2. Although rarely in Oregon, owners may store plastic pallets in dedicated “cutoff” rooms with 3-hour-rated walls, an exterior wall, and NFPA 13-compliant sprinklers. For grocery store type small piles of plastic pallets, NFPA 13 allows two 4-foot-high stacks with the same separation and 0.2 gpm/ft² density required for wood pallets.

Practical Tips

During inspections, suggest owners mark designated pallet storage areas with signs and floor striping in addition to the floor plan required in OFC 3201.3.2. During the inspection, confirm sprinkler densities and K-Factor ratings, and check for proper pallet pile heights and separations.

Recent Oregon fires show the stakes, guiding owners to follow the Oregon Fire Code and NFPA 13 to prevent devastating losses. Please contact the OSFM Technical Services Unit at 503-934-8204 or osfm.ofc@osfm.oregon.gov if you have questions.



FUN HAD BY ALL AT OREGON AG FEST

The Oregon State Fire Marshal took part in Oregon Ag Fest at the Salem Fairgrounds on April 26–27, joining thousands of families for a weekend focused on agriculture, community, and safety.

With more than 25,000 attendees, Ag Fest offered an excellent opportunity for agency staff to engage with children and families—especially those from rural agricultural areas—on the importance of fire safety and prevention. The event featured hands-on exhibits and interactive displays, creating a fun and educational environment for all ages.

Oregon State Fire Marshal staff, alongside local fire service partners from Marion and Polk counties, were on-site throughout the two-day event, sharing tips on fire prevention, home safety, and emergency preparedness.

The agency thanks all participating partners and looks forward to future opportunities to connect with communities across Oregon.



FROM THE **INTERNET**

Nestucca's Swiftwater Rescue Team is always pushing the limits to stay at the top of their game. Three of their dedicated professionals were in Skamania County, Washington, in April undergoing advanced training to become internationally certified swift water technicians.

This certification means we are even more prepared to respond to water rescues and serve our community with the highest level of expertise. Training never stops. When seconds count, they're ready. [Check out their post here.](#)

RESCUE TRAINING

In April, Klamath County Fire District #1 did low/steep angle rescue training. With crews practicing various knots, patient packaging techniques, hauling systems, and anchor set ups.

Practicing on high acuity, low frequency calls ensures their teams maintain the skills needed to perform when the time comes.

[Check out their post here.](#)



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?

Kassie Keller, public affairs director
Kassie.Keller@osfm.oregon.gov

John Hendricks, public affairs specialist
Johnathan.Hendricks@osfm.oregon.gov

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