

OFFICE STATE FIRE MARSHAL

LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING SESSIONS

The 2021 Oregon Legislative Assembly passed Senate Bill 762, Oregon's comprehensive wildfire preparedness and resiliency bill. The bill is grounded in the three tenets of the national cohesive wildfire strategy. In addition, Senate Bill 762 implements new programs, mandates, and strategies that will change Oregon's approach to response, preparedness, and resiliency to wildfire.

- Creating fire adapted communities
- Developing safe and effective wildfire response, and
- Increasing the resiliency of Oregon's landscapes

The law codified wildfire prevention, risk reduction, and emergency response programs for the Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM). An essential component of structuring the new and expanded OSFM programs involved gathering feedback and gaining local perspectives to inform investment and program design strategies. This was conducted through virtual listening sessions, which provided an opportunity for the Oregon fire service, partners, and members of the public to offer input and guidance for OSFM's programs. Those who attended provided local experiences, expanded on current and future needs, and identified challenges to consider when designing or updating services and programs. Attendees also highlighted the importance of identifying what success looks like for investments in future programs.

EMERGING THEMES

Key themes emerged for OSFM to consider when implementing new programs, prioritizing community investments, and providing wildfire response. Participants acknowledged and communicated the need for durable, long-term investments in the wildfire preparedness and response system. Focuses from the listening and understanding sessions included:

- Provide funding to support sustained community education projects.
- Assist local fire service agencies with staff capacity.
- Support community preparedness activities through funding and appropriate support staff for those programs.
- Provide local wildland caches, equipment, and capital projects.
- Distribute funding and equipment equitably across Oregon.
- Ensure programs are available to a wide base of recipients.
- Utilize a streamlined grant process to ensure availability and access for all grant applicants.

"There is a need for strategically placed logistical facilities, training facilities, and equipment caches." - **Chief Darren Bucich**

"Create WUI Caches at strategic locations throughout the State." - **Karl Koenig, Oregon Firefighters Council**

"I agree with the recruitment and retention comment, especially for the smaller and more rural areas where volunteer and/or staffing levels are low and are at the most risk for large wildfires. Consider designing programs and investing in ways to help increase personnel in these areas." - **Chief Rob Bullock**



ATTENDEE QUOTES

"Getting programs like Firewise out to the community. We get asked, "what can I do?"; Resources we can give to property owners to get them started would help our local area."

-Chief Rob Murphy

"I would like to see an incentive in this funding to go to regional coordination of efforts. Also, the formation of a pathway for agencies to share a "Community of Practice Playbook" so communities who have tried programs can share their results..." - **Chief Bob Horton**

THE PATH FORWARD

Stakeholder feedback advised that OSFM's wildfire initiatives and programs will require sustained investments in community risk reduction, wildfire prevention, and emergency response programs across multiple biennia. Attendees indicated that one-time or uneven investments would not facilitate durable, lasting change in their communities.

The demands on Oregon's structural fire service will continue to increase as wildfire risk increases to our communities. The investments from Senate Bill 762 in OSFM have positioned the office to address the increased risk and demand on Oregonians and our fire service through its programs. However, lasting and long-term investments must continue in order to stabilize our response system and preparedness programs.

To best address the information and feedback provided through the listening and understanding sessions and continued conversations with stakeholders and the public, the OSFM will invest locally and regionally. The office will develop tailored funding and program solutions for community education, community risk reduction, strategic response equipment caches, and capital projects to meet the need of OSFM's partners statewide. As OSFM continues to implement these programs, it will prioritize feedback from stakeholders to ensure the programs reflect and serve Oregon.

