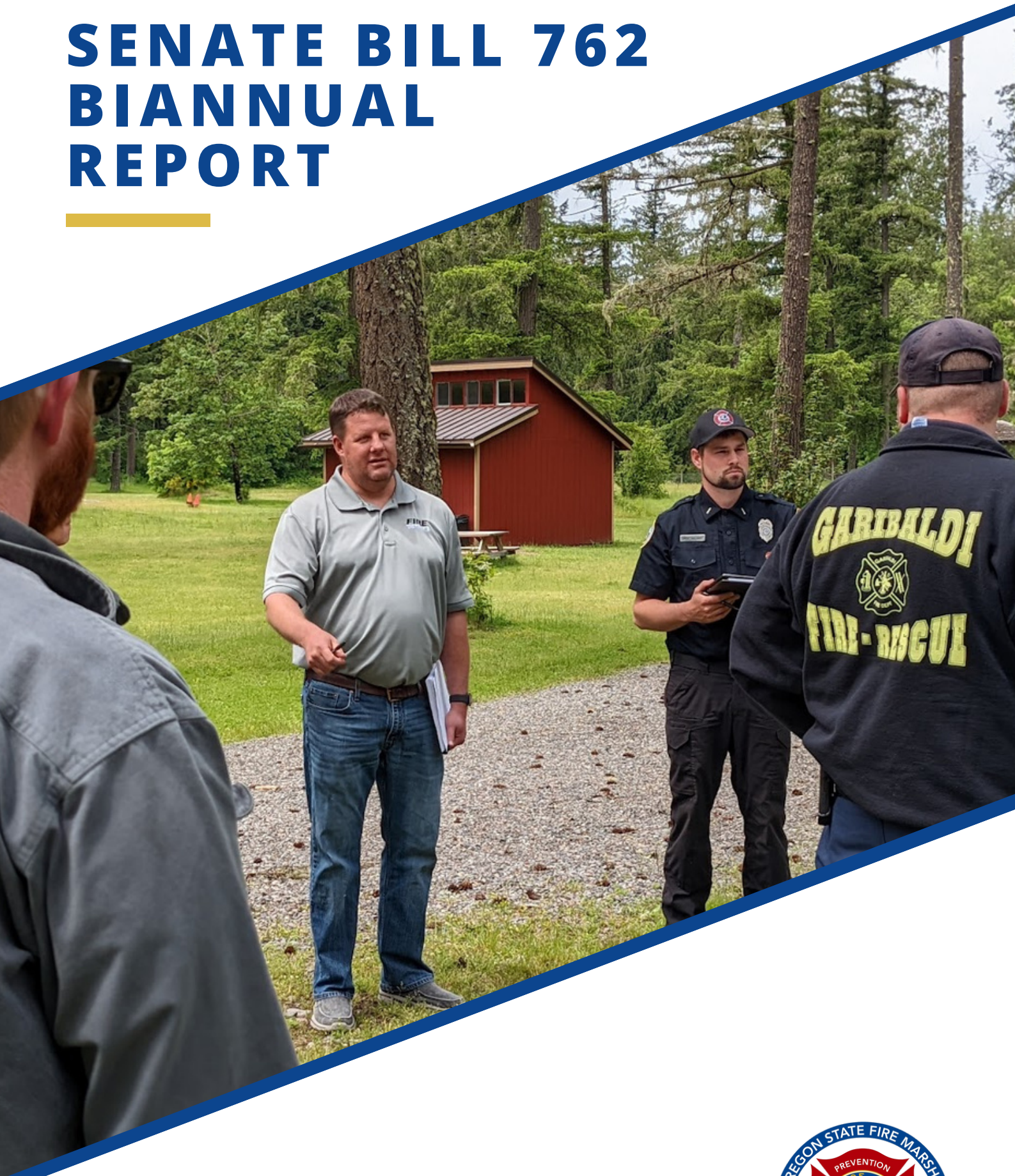


OREGON OFFICE OF STATE FIRE MARSHAL

SENATE BILL 762 BIANNUAL REPORT



AUGUST // 2022





OFFICE OF STATE FIRE MARSHAL BIANNUAL REPORT

The Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) was asked to provide two annual reports to the Oregon Legislature documenting the work completed as it relates to Senate Bill 762. The law codified wildfire prevention, risk reduction, and emergency response programs for the OSFM.

This report provides status and financial updates for the following OSFM responsibilities as required by the Senate Bill 762, Section 10(2)(a)–(d):

- The status regarding community risk reduction and the establishment, administration, and enforcement of defensible space requirements.
- The amount of moneys expended during the year for community risk reduction and the establishment, administration, or enforcement of defensible space requirements.
- The amount of moneys expended during the year for the suppression of fires on wildland-urban interface lands.
- Any recommendations from the state fire marshal for legislative action, including, but not limited to, current or future resource and funding needs for community risk reduction and establishing, administering, or enforcing defensible space requirements.



COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT ADMINISTRATION, AND ENFORCEMENT OF DEFENSIBLE SPACE REQUIREMENTS

The Community Risk Reduction Unit is fully staffed with hiring complete. Since OSFM's February report, the fire risk reduction specialists (FRRSs) have engaged with fire chiefs, fire defense boards, fire prevention cooperatives, and other stakeholder groups. Additionally, the FRRSs have been building new relationships with community wildfire protection planning groups, education partners, and healthcare facilities. Finally, the Community Risk Unit supports educational opportunities for Oregonians and partner agencies.

- 42 educational events
- Four (4) Assessing Structure Ignition Potential (ASIP) training
- Nine (9) media partnerships
- 85 meetings or presentations given
- Three (3) media days for local media partners and community education

Senate Bill 762 directed the OSFM to adopt a statewide minimum defensible space code on lands that meet the definition of the wildland-urban interface (WUI) and to establish rules pertaining to the enforcement of the code in "high" and "extreme" wildfire risk areas. The code adoption process is on track to meet the legislative deadline of December 2022. In addition, OSFM staff will host seventeen (17) community town halls during the third quarter to gather community input on the defensible space code.



DEFENSIBLE SPACE CODE TIMELINE



AMOUNT OF MONEYS EXPENDED TO DATE FOR COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT, ADMINISTRATION, OR ENFORCEMENT OF DEFENSIBLE SPACE REQUIREMENTS

The Office of State Fire Marshal designed and implemented three (3) grant programs with the funding provided in Senate Bill 762 in the first and second quarters of 2022. These investments were planned following robust feedback from stakeholders, partners, and community members. In addition, the office will launch a series of grants in the fourth quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of 2023, explicitly geared toward local governments, community risk reduction, and sustainable funding for fire service agencies.

DEFENSIBLE SPACE INCENTIVE GRANT

The Community Risk Reduction Unit provided funding to schools and hospitals to create defensible space around critical community facilities. OSFM provided \$271,000 to 123 schools and 10 hospitals.

ENGINE PROGRAM

In July, OSFM launched the application period for the engine program for the Oregon fire service. This new program will allow OSFM to procure fire apparatus to increase response capacity across the Oregon fire service. These apparatus will be strategically placed around the state and are intended to assist fire agencies with keeping fires small and away from communities. Applications will be accepted until late October.

WILDFIRE SEASON STAFFING GRANT

To boost capacity within the Oregon fire service, the OSFM awarded \$6 million in grants to 180 structural fire service agencies. The funding was used to hire firefighting staff during the 2022 wildfire season. As part of the OSFM's Response Ready Oregon Initiative, this grant opportunity was available to all 306 local fire districts and departments.



AMOUNT OF MONEYS EXPENDED TO DATE FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF FIRES ON WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE LANDS

In 2022, because of the funds memorialized and provided in Senate Bill 762, OSFM has new wildfire response tools during months of heightened wildfire risk. This is the second year OSFM could mobilize resources outside of a formal conflagration declaration through "pre-positioning" (placing firefighting equipment and personnel in high-risk areas for brief periods of high fire danger) and "immediate response" (sending equipment and personnel to growing wildfires). By strategically using these response tools in times of elevated fire risk due to weather, local resource drawdown, and expected ignition risk, resources can stop fires while they are small and keep them away from communities.

At the time of this report, the Oregon Fire Mutual Aid System has not responded to a conflagration. However, as the 2022 fire season threat increases, OSFM is expected to incur response costs. As of the date of this report, the OSFM has pre-positioned one (1) task force and responded to two (2) immediate response requests where air assets were used. Approximately \$115,783.30 was spent on pre-positioning and immediate response. With the funding provided in Senate Bill 762, OSFM has been taking steps to bolster and modernize Oregon's response capacity through a new engine program and regional staff that collaborate with fire defense board chiefs.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Continuation of these new programs and initiatives will be vital in 2023-25 as Oregon continues to face challenging wildfire seasons, significant expansion of the wildland-urban interface, and a growing population requiring services the OSFM provides.

The OSFM proposes durable funding for its initiatives and programs Response Ready, which focuses on protecting Oregonians, Fire Adapted Oregon, reducing risks of catastrophic wildfire within Oregon communities, and a second-in-the-nation statewide wildland-urban defensible space code targeted at vegetation management around high-risk homes in the WUI to increase survivability.

Additionally, OSFM proposes an option for funding expenses associated with mobilizing local fire service personnel and equipment in response to governor-declared conflagrations under ORS 476.510-476.610. As wildfires increase in size, frequency, and duration, Oregon has seen increased risk and costs associated with preparedness, response, and recovery. If we cannot create a sustainable fund to pay for fires, our rural fire districts will continue to be burdened with the costs associated with statewide fire response efforts. Additionally, as the service delivery expectations for the fire service increase, it has become a challenge for many agencies to respond in support of the state under the current model.



This report was prepared by:

OFFICE OF STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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