

Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group

Safety Alert

Risk Implications for Potential Wind Event for August 29th, 2015

An exceptionally strong frontal system will move across the region Saturday bringing strong gusty winds with low relative humidity for 5 to 6 hours during the burn period. This could be the biggest wind event in the Pacific Northwest of the 2015 fire season.

In this type of critical weather event constantly re-evaluating the ever changing risk environment before, during, and after, is critical to firefighter and public safety.

Specific Conditions:

- South to southwest winds sustained up to 35 miles per hour with gusts possible up to 60.
- Potential for substantial changes in wind direction.
- Relative humidity as low as 10 to 15 percent possible
- Current drought stressed fuel conditions support extreme fire behavior
- Extremely rapid fire spread
- Abrupt changes in fire spread direction
- Significant long range spotting
- Loss of existing contained fire line

High Risk Situations

- The greatest hazard to resources may not be from the fire they are currently assigned. Fire behavior from neighboring fires will affect fire behavior, rates of spread and direction on all fires. There is a high likelihood of fires merging with neighboring incidents creating increased risk to firefighters and member of the public between incidents. **Placing fire resources between uncontrolled flanks of separate incidents increases the risk that may not be able to be mitigated.**
- Previously identified escape routes and safety zones should constantly be re-evaluated for fire behavior, tree hazards and other possible hazards. Downed trees and branches may limit mobility of firefighting resources and possibly block escape routes.
- Extreme potential for falling trees, including trees weakened by fire and drought effects across the Geographical Area.
- High potential for blown down power lines that can start new fires and limit mobility of firefighting resources

Other hazards

- Aviation support will be limited or non-existent by wind and visibility from blowing dust, smoke and debris.
- Blowing dust and smoke will limit visibility on roadways and travel routes
- High profile vehicles will have difficulty traveling
- Large loose objects may become airborne. Secure tents and other loose objects in camps, staging areas and helibases.

Continuously reevaluate the risk management process and mitigations throughout operations. Contact your local Incident Meteorologist, Fire Behavior Analyst or National Weather Service Office for specific impacts to your local area from this event.

