

News Advisory



The Pacific Northwest Wildland Firefighting Community

2014 Wildland Fire Coverage Guidelines for Oregon and Washington

PORTLAND, OR – The Pacific Northwest wildland fire-fighting community -- including the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Oregon Department of Forestry and the Washington Department of Natural Resources -- welcomes news media coverage of wildfires in the Pacific Northwest.

A few tips follow to help make your wildfire coverage better, easier and safer.

2014 NORTHWEST FIRE SEASON OUTLOOK

Normal significant wildland fire potential is expected for May. Much of central and southern Oregon will increase to above normal significant wildland fire potential in June and expand to encompass much of Oregon and south central Washington in July and August.

April precipitation was above average across much of Washington and northern Oregon. Southern Oregon and sections of central Washington remained relatively dry. Warmer-than-normal temperatures were observed through much of April for the Area except along the Canadian border. Following a very dry fall, the overall accumulation of precipitation since January has been at or above normal for much of the Area, with some exceptions. Unseasonal warm conditions resulted in precipitation falling mostly as rain in Oregon, resulting in low snowpack despite above normal precipitation during the last three months. Snowpack in Washington, however, remained near or above normal.

Climate outlooks for May through August point to warmer- and drier-than normal conditions over Oregon and Washington. May historically does not support much risk of large fires. However, unusual dryness and low snowpack observed over much of Oregon and lower elevations in eastern Washington may boost the potential for possible fires during dry, windy conditions. If normal temperature and rainfall trends follow in June, the risk of large fires appears poised to be elevated sooner than usual over much of Oregon in June and worsen in July and August.

TYPES OF WILDLAND FIRE

A *wildland fire* is any non-structure fire in the wildland. There are two types of wildland fires:

- *Wildfires* are unplanned ignitions or planned ignitions that are declared wildfires. The term *wildfire* applies to all unplanned ignitions, including fires formally termed *Wildland Fire Use*.
- *Prescribed fires* are planned ignitions.

Recent technological advances in decision analysis provide incident-level support to managers in the *Two Kinds of Fire* framework. With updated implementation guidance fire managers have flexibility to:

- Manage fire for multiple objectives, including public safety and resource objectives.
- Alter management objectives during a fire as conditions change, including fuels, weather, social considerations, and jurisdictions.

All human-caused fires will be suppressed. When a human starts a wildfire, such as through arson or accident, it's an unwanted event that we'll work hard to put out as safely as possible and at the lowest possible cost.

- If a wildfire starts naturally, we can use different objectives and tactics in different parts of the fire. Examples:
 - The part of a wildfire where homes and wildland vegetation mix will have our very highest priority, and we'll try to put it out.
 - Another flank of that same fire that is burning in rocks, threatening nothing, and helping the local ecosystem might be watched closely, but not fought. We'll take our cue on making such decisions from the local agency's resource management plan. Local conditions and the needs of neighbors and cooperating agencies will also guide us.
 - Our objectives on a fire can fluctuate due to weather, people's needs, and different jurisdictions.

Initial Attack: The first response to a reported wildland fire. Ninety-eight percent of wildfires are small, lightning or human-caused fires suppressed by first responders/local crews.

Extended Attack: Fires that escape initial attack during the first 48 hours and require a larger organization and additional resources to manage.

Large fires: Defined as any wildland fire in timber 100 acres or greater and 300 acres or greater in grasslands/rangelands,

FIRE FIGHTERS

Initial Attack: Fire crews from the nearest unit such as a Ranger District or BLM Field Office usually on an engine, will respond to new, small fires. Initial attack in remote areas may be done by smokejumpers or rappellers.

Teams: Incident Management Teams (IMTs) can be either geographic area Type 2 teams that typically work within a state, or national Type 1 teams that respond to wildfire and other incidents on

a national basis. There are two national teams based in the Pacific Northwest, known as Team 2 and Team 3 (Team 1 became the Alaska team years ago).

Teams typically have 20 – 50 members that oversee firefighting efforts. Under the Incident Command System (ICS), teams are organized as operations, logistics, finance, planning, safety and information. An incident commander and sometimes deputy “I.C.” are in charge. The team is delegated specific authority to manage the fire by the “host” unit.

Crews: Twenty-member groups led by a crew boss that provide the on-the-ground staffing for building fire lines and other “ground-pounding” work. There are Type 1 crews, the highly trained Interagency Hotshot Crews, and Type II crews. These crews can be either agency, state or contract units.

TO VISIT THE FIRE

First call should be to the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center (NWCC) in Portland – **503.808.2764**. A media desk is staffed during the summer wildfire season, sometimes 24-hours if conditions warrant. Staff there has up-to-date information on large fires throughout the Northwest.

If a team has been assigned, it will have information officers to assist you. Please call to let them know you are coming – you will get better assistance if they can plan on your arrival. NWCC can give you their numbers and directions to fire camp (Incident Command Post – ICP). In addition to briefings, information officers often can escort you to the fire for a firsthand account. No unauthorized visitors, including media, are allowed unescorted within the fire perimeter for obvious safety reasons.

TO FLY THE FIRE

Typically, there are intensive aerial fire suppression activities on a large fire. Helicopters, air tankers and support fixed-wing aircraft could be flying. An official FAA-ordered Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) likely will be in effect. To arrange permission for flying within the air closure, call one NWCC or the fire’s Incident Information Office. We will coordinate your flight with the fire dispatcher and get you a radio frequency for contacting the air coordinator at the fire.

By radio, that air coordinator will tell your plane when to enter the air closure, set a direction to approach, and assign an altitude. The air coordinator will also provide directions for leaving the fire area. It is also recommended that pilots contact FAA directly, before leaving their base.

TO GET ON THE FIRE LINE, BRING BOOTS

Current Forest Service regulations require that all persons on the fire line wear fire-retardant clothing with hard hats, gloves, fire shelters and wear high-topped leather boots. We can usually supply everything but boots at fire camp -- **you must supply your own high-topped leather boots**. Failure to have high-topped, leather boots will keep you from the fire line and may waste a long day.

A Public Information Officer escort will be assigned to take your news crew to the fire line, and can often provide a tour of fire camp.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Visit the NWCC website at: nwccweb.us It's a wonderful site with information about current fires, weather, Northwest fire history, prognostications and more.
- Call the NWCC media desk for experienced, friendly and personal help – **503.808.2764**
- Visit the National Interagency Fire Center (in Boise) website – www.nifc.gov
- Check out <http://inciweb.nwcc.gov> for information about large fires nationwide.
- *(Note Inciweb's new address)*

GLOSSARY OF FIRE TERMS

Confused by the IMTs, ERCs and PIOs? For a glossary of fire terms and acronyms, visit:
<http://www.nwcc.gov/pms/pubs/glossary/pms205.pdf>