



OREGON STATE FIRE MARSHAL

THE GATED WYE

SEPTEMBER 2024



PREPAREDNESS IN FOCUS FOR SEPTEMBER

September is the perfect time to focus on preparing for the unexpected. Disasters like wildfires, floods, and earthquakes can strike at any time, and being ready can make all the difference. September is National Preparedness Month.

Want to know how you can get involved and make sure your family and neighbors are prepared? Inside, we've got the details on the first-ever Great Oregon Camp-In and practical tips for emergency readiness.

[Read more on page 2.](#)

OSFM'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preparedness Month • P.02

Wildfire Update • P.04

Staffing Grant • P.05

Data Dashboards • P.08

Codes Corner • P.13

New Employees • P.16

From the Internet • P.17

Contact Us • P.18



SEPTEMBER MARKS NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

Disasters can happen at any time, whether it's wildfires, floods, heatwaves, ice storms, or even the threat of a major earthquake. In Oregon, it's crucial for everyone to be ready and know how to help each other during these events. During the month of September, Oregonians are encouraged to focus on disaster preparedness.

To support this, FEMA and the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) are marking National Preparedness Month in September and the Great ShakeOut in October. These initiatives are about getting everyone involved in preparing for emergencies..

A new Be 2 Weeks Ready Toolkit has been launched by OEM, available online at Oregon.gov/OEM. This toolkit, in English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, and Vietnamese (with American Sign Language videos coming soon), is designed to help people and communities get ready for emergencies and practice their preparedness together.

"This toolkit is a vital part of building a culture of readiness," said Erin McMahon, director of the Oregon Department of Emergency Management. "It's important for communities to work together to be better prepared and ensure everyone is ready for emergencies."

The Be 2 Weeks Ready program is meant for groups like faith organizations, neighborhood groups, 4-H clubs, schools, and workplaces. By working together, these groups can improve their readiness.

One way to practice is by joining the first-ever Great Oregon Camp-In, happening the weekend after the Great ShakeOut on October 17. This event is a great chance to test your emergency skills by spending a night without electricity or running water. If camping isn't possible, try going without these conveniences for a few hours or a whole day.

Continued on Page 3.

SIMPLE STEPS TO BE TWO-WEEKS READY

Here are some simple steps to start:

- Sign up for local emergency alerts at [ORAlert.gov](https://www.oralert.gov).
- Turn on Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) on your phone.
- Learn about Oregon's evacuation levels and routes.
- Check road conditions on [TripCheck.com](https://www.tripcheck.com).
- Pack go-bags with essentials for every family member, including pets.

Stay in touch with local emergency management offices, community emergency response teams (CERT), sheriff's offices, or tribal police for more advice and updates.

Also, make copies of important documents and keep them in a password-protected online drive or on a flash drive in your go-bag.

The goal is to make sure everyone feels ready and confident about handling emergencies. The Be 2 Weeks Ready Toolkit is here to help build strong community connections and improve overall preparedness.





AUGUST WILDFIRES CHALLENGES FIREFIGHTERS STATEWIDE

The Oregon fire service experienced an extremely busy start to August, marked by relentless wildfire activity and unprecedented challenges. In response to the growing threat, Governor Tina Kotek invoked the Emergency Conflagration Act four times in the first half of the month alone, adding to an already taxing wildfire season.

This intense period follows a July that saw several megafires ignite across the state, prompting a massive response effort from firefighters both within Oregon and across the country. Throughout August, hot and dry conditions, combined with numerous lightning storms, further complicated firefighting efforts and led to several new fire starts. However, a much-needed respite arrived with wetting rains in the middle of the month, offering some relief to the overworked crews.

The Oregon State Fire Marshal and the state's structural fire service worked in close coordination with various partners, including the Oregon Department of Forestry, federal agencies, tribal authorities, and local governments, to tackle the wildfires. These partnerships were crucial in managing the fires and protecting communities.

The four conflagrations in August were:

- Telephone Fire in Harney County on August 1
- Elk Lane Fire in Jefferson County on August 5
- Town Gulch Fire in Baker County on August 6
- Dixon Fire in Douglas County on August 10

As of mid-August, the 2024 wildfire season had 13 conflagrations, with numerous immediate response and pre-positioning assignments. The OSFM mobilized a significant force, including 66 task forces, two strike teams, approximately 880 firefighters, 270 engines, and 64 water tenders. Out-of-state resources were also called in from four states to support the efforts. The OSFM Agency Operations Center was operational and staffed for 39 consecutive days, highlighting the scale of the response required this season.

As September begins, the Oregon fire service remains vigilant, prepared to respond to any new fire threats that may arise as the state navigates one of its most challenging wildfire seasons in recent memory

WILDFIRE SEASON STAFFING GRANT, OSFM ENGINE PROGRAM SEEING SUCCESS

As Oregon battles one of its most intense wildfire seasons on record, the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Wildfire Season Staffing Grant and Engine Program have proven to be crucial in enhancing the state's firefighting capabilities.

The Engine Program, designed to equip fire agencies with the necessary tools to combat wildfires, has been instrumental in increasing the capacity of Oregon's fire service. Marion County, for example, has seen a dramatic improvement in its ability to respond to wildfire emergencies.

"Senate Bill 762 has significantly increased staffing and capacity through the OSFM engine program and seasonal staffing. Marion County fire agencies can now provide a deeper level of support than ever before," said Chief Jim Trierweiler, Mt. Angel Fire District.

Chief Trierweiler emphasized the importance of not just having the right equipment but also the necessary personnel to operate it. The wildfire season staffing grants have enabled fire agencies to boost their ranks, ensuring that they are adequately staffed to meet the demands of an increasingly volatile wildfire season.

This season, Marion County was able to deploy nearly four task forces simultaneously—a significant increase from past years, where deploying two task forces was common, and three was considered a stretch.

"Because of Senate Bill 762, Marion County, collectively with our 19 fire agencies, can now dig deeper in providing support to the Oregon Fire Mutual Aid System," Chief Trierweiler said.

The impact of these enhanced resources has been tangible. Chief Trierweiler recounted a recent deployment where Marion County's task force played a crucial role in saving at least 13 homes by redirecting a wildfire away from threatened structures.

"The investment from SB 762 is saving millions in protecting property and even saving lives," Trierweiler said.

The OSFM Wildfire Season Staffing Grant and Engine Program are proving to be game changers in Oregon's firefighting efforts.





FIRE LINE PHOTOS



MARKING **FOUR YEARS** SINCE THE 2020 OREGON WILDFIRES

September 7, 2024, marks four years since the devastating wildfires that swept through Oregon, burning more than a million acres. The journey since then has been challenging, with thousands of Oregonians still working through the recovery process as communities continue to rebuild and move forward.

On September 7, 2020, fires ignited under critically hot and dry conditions and rapidly spread due to high winds. Nearly 500,000 Oregonians were under evacuation notice, with over 40,000 forced to flee their homes. The response required a massive effort from the Oregon Fire Mutual Aid System (OFMAS), with 179 fire agencies contributing resources. Nearly 300 firefighting apparatus and over 2,000 members of Oregon's structural firefighting service were deployed in a coordinated effort to protect lives and property.

As we mark this fourth anniversary, the Oregon State Fire Marshal extends deep gratitude to those who have been working tirelessly through the recovery process and to everyone who answered the call for help four years ago. Your dedication and service continue to make a lasting impact on the lives of Oregonians.

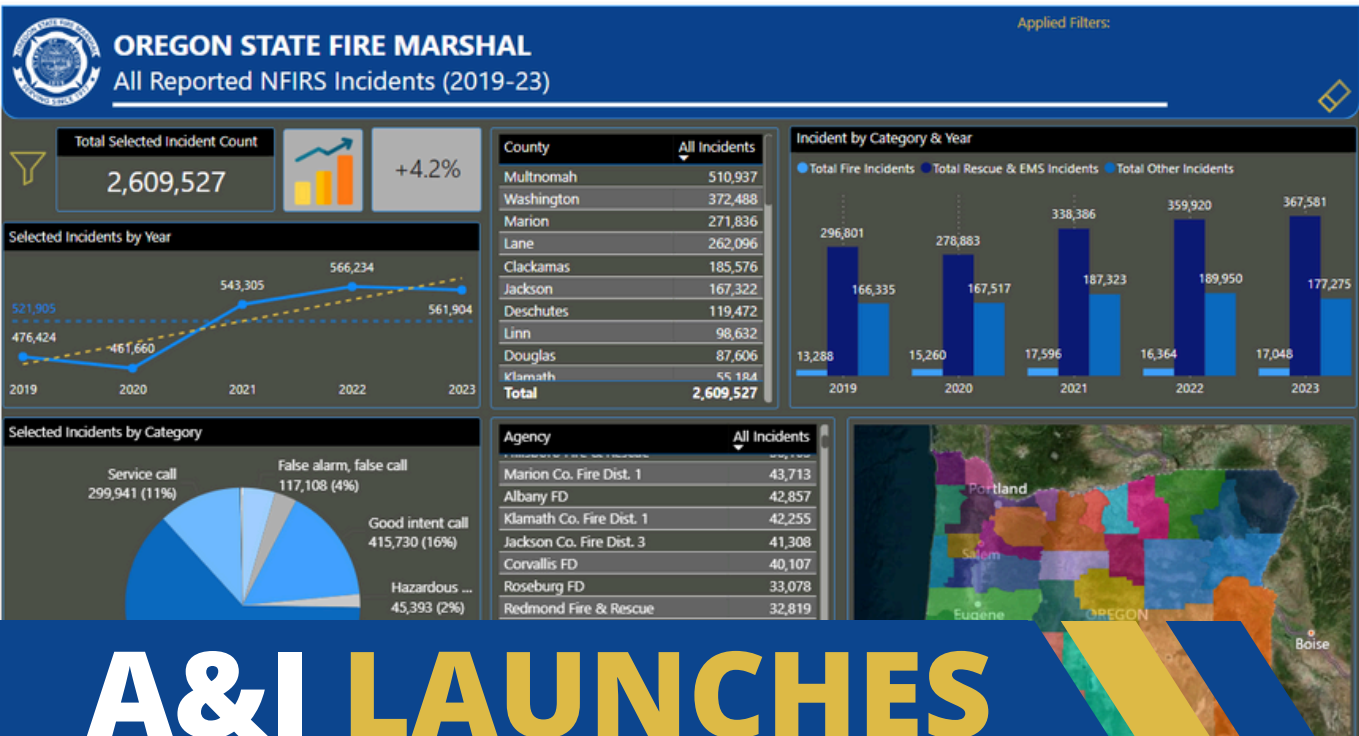


MAUI MARKS ONE YEAR MILESTONE

August 8 marked one year since the devastating Maui wildfires, a tragedy that deeply impacted the island and its people. These fires were a stark reminder of the growing number of "mega fires" we've seen across the country in the past year. These large and intense fires, driven by extreme weather and drought, have destroyed homes, taken lives, and changed communities forever.

In the face of these challenges, communities have shown incredible strength. Firefighters, emergency responders, and volunteers have worked tirelessly to protect lives and property. The lessons learned from the Maui wildfires are helping us better prepare for future fire seasons.

As we remember the Maui wildfires, let's continue to focus on fire prevention and support those who work to keep our communities safe.



A&I LAUNCHES NEW DASHBOARDS

We're excited to announce the launch of three new public dashboards that will enhance our fire service and better engage the community. As mentioned in the April 2024 issue of The Gated Wye (pg. 8), these dashboards are replacing the old PDF versions of the Annual Supplemental Report. This change is a big step forward in how we share and use data, showing our commitment to using technology to improve our services and keep up with the needs of modern fire service and community planning.

Here's a quick look at what each dashboard offers:

1. Oregon NFIRS Incident Summary: This dashboard provides a summary of all NFIRS incident types reported by structural firefighting agencies to the OSFM. It's a tool for taking a data-driven approach to emergency management.
2. Structural Fire Agency Demographics: This dashboard gives basic information about the resources and demographics of structural firefighting agencies in Oregon.
3. Oregon Civilian Fire Casualties: This dashboard offers a detailed view of civilian fire casualties, including the factors involved, to help with prevention planning and public awareness.

These dashboards are designed to be user-friendly, allowing you to customize views and access the data directly through CSV files for deeper analysis.

We're also offering virtual training sessions to help you make the most of these tools. You can sign up for a session using this link: [Register here](#). If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to the Analytics & Intelligence Unit at 503-934-8250 or osfm.data@osfm.oregon.gov.

OSFM TAKES TO THE STATE FAIR IN SALEM

We're thrilled to share the success of the Oregon State Fire Marshal's (OSFM) return to the Oregon State Fair this year! Once again, we were part of the Natural Resource area, where we had a fantastic opportunity to connect with fairgoers and partner agencies, raising awareness about the important work we do.

This year was particularly exciting because OSFM acquired the Fish and Wildlife building in the Natural Resource area. This new space allowed us to engage with visitors on key topics like home fire prevention, defensible space, and wildfire prevention.

Our display on Fire Adapted Oregon and general fire safety was a big hit, helping to educate the public on how to keep their homes and communities safe. We also introduced a fun new addition—a photo booth where attendees could snap pictures and take home a memory from their visit.

Visitors also had the chance to watch The Lostine Firewise Video "Neighbors Helping Neighbors," which highlights the importance of community cooperation in wildfire prevention.

Thanks to the support of our Fire Prevention Education and Community Wildfire Risk Reduction teams, and the extra help from OSFM staff who volunteered each day, our presence at the fair was a resounding success.

We appreciate everyone who came out to the fair and helped make this year's event such a positive experience. We look forward to continuing our work in fire prevention and community safety, both at the fair and beyond.



GET READY FOR FIRE PREVENTION MONTH

This October is Fire Prevention Month, and the Oregon State Fire Marshal (OSFM) invites you to join us in celebrating fire safety. Our focus this year is on the importance of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

Here are some key tips to keep your home safe:

- Test your alarms according to the manufacturer: This makes sure they're working properly.
- Replace alarms that are more than 10 years old.
- Install alarms: Inside bedrooms, in hallways outside sleeping areas, and on every level of your home, including the basement.
- Don't remove batteries for nuisance alarms: Instead, use the hush button to temporarily silence the alarm while still staying protected.

To help spread the word, the department will be sending every fire agency a Fire Prevention Month box filled with useful information and tools to share at events throughout October and beyond. No need to sign up—each agency will automatically receive a box.

Throughout the month, the Oregon State Fire Marshal will be posting fire safety messages on Facebook, X, and Instagram.

We're also supporting the National Fire Protection Association's Fire Prevention Week, which this year highlights the theme, "Smoke Alarms: Make them work for you!"

Fire Prevention Month is the perfect time to remind everyone to plan, prepare, and prevent fires in their homes. Let's work together to make our communities safer, one alarm at a time.

HONORING 9/11 23 YEARS LATER

This month will mark 23 years since the 9/11 attack on the U.S. that took the lives of thousands of Americans including 343 firefighters.

To commemorate the day, the names of every person killed in the attack will be read. During the service, organizers say they will observe six moments of silence, acknowledging when each of the World Trade Center towers were struck and fell and the times corresponding to the attack on the Pentagon and the crash of Flight 93.

At sundown, the annual "Tribute in Light" will once again illuminate the sky in commemoration of the anniversary of the attacks.



GET COMFORTABLE WITH **DEFENSIBLE SPACE.**



FIVE SUMMER 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.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO
GET A **FREE ASSESSMENT.**



FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY SERVICES DIVISION UPDATE

Prevention is the cornerstone of our agency. Our largest division, fire and life safety, works hard to prevent fires and other incidents. After a fire, our deputy state fire marshals investigate the cause of fires to help prevent future fires.

Here is a snapshot of the work this division accomplished in July. From healthcare facilities to your home's defensible space, our team is here to keep Oregon safe.



- 87** TECHNICAL SERVICE REQUESTS
- 30** PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS
- 18** ABOVEGROUND STORAGE TANK PLAN REVIEWS

TRAINING & EDUCATION



- 33** NEW WORKDAY LEARNERS
- 15** FIRE INSPECTOR 1 & 2 TRAININGS
- 72** POST DISASTER BUILDING SAFETY EVALUATION TRAINING ATTENDEES
- 58** OREGON FIRE CODE COMMITTEE 2025 ADOPTION ATTENDEES



- 2,210** DEFENSIBLE SPACE ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED

INVESTIGATIONS & INSPECTIONS



- 38** FIRE INVESTIGATIONS
- 444** FIRE/LIFE SAFETY INSPECTIONS
- 90** FACILITY LICENSE INSPECTIONS

HEALTHCARE



- 28** CMS HEALTHCARE SURVEYS
- 25** HEALTHCARE FACILITY PLAN REVIEWS

OFMAS SUPPORT



- 226** HOURS INCLUDING AGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER, DRIVE TIME, AND INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS

BY THE NUMBERS



CODES CORNER

LET'S TALK SOLAR SYSTEM FIRES

Electrical failures discovered in ground-mounted PV systems resulted in three large fires in Oregon this summer.

The U.S. Fire Administration found the latest data below:

- Solar system fires more than doubled from 2015 to 2018.
- 56 solar system fires recorded in 2018, up from 25 in 2015

Common causes of solar PV fires

A primary cause of solar PV fires is electrical arcing, which occurs over high-voltage direct current (DC) lines. This happens when there is a compromise of the electrical system's wiring or connections. There is an increased risk over time for arcs to occur, attributed to normal "wear and tear" of a solar PV system that makes system maintenance a priority.

Many factors that contribute to this condition:

- Corroded cables and connections
- Loose wiring between junction/splice boxes
- Improper cable support
- Animals chewing on wires
- Improper grounding (leading to a ground fault, phase to ground)
- Ground fault "blind spot" that manifests itself at too low of a level for the ground fault device to operate
- ARC fault (phase to phase)

The 2022 Oregon Fire Code has the following requirements that can be enforced to help mitigate this potentially disastrous situation.

2022 OFC Section 603

All electrical equipment and components need to be maintained in accordance with OFC Section 603. Listed equipment is required under 603.1.1 and must be maintained per the owner's manual.

Continued on Page 15



603.1.1 Equipment and wiring. All electrical equipment wiring, devices, and appliances shall be tested; listed and labeled; and installed, used and maintained in accordance with NFPA 70 and all instructions included as part of such listing.

603.2.1 Modified or damaged. Electrical wiring, devices, equipment and appliances that are modified or damaged, and constitute an electrical shock or fire hazard, shall not be used until repaired or replaced in accordance with this code and NFPA 70. This also states that the PV equipment be maintained and repaired as needed.

The fire code official can request owners to provide proof of permitted electrical work as required in 1205.1 and NFPA 70, the National Electrical Code.

2022 OFC Section 1205

1205.1 General. Solar photovoltaic (PV) systems shall be installed in accordance with the International Building Code or International Residential Code. The electrical portion of solar PV systems shall be installed in accordance with NFPA 70. Rooftop-mounted solar photovoltaic systems shall be installed in accordance with Sections 1205.2 through 1205.4.3. Ground-mounted solar photovoltaic systems shall comply with Section 1205.5.

1205.5.1 Vegetation control. A clear, brush-free area of 10 feet (3048 mm) shall be required around the perimeter of the ground-mounted photovoltaic arrays. A maintained vegetative surface or a noncombustible base, approved by the fire code official, shall be installed and maintained under the photovoltaic arrays and associated electrical equipment installations. Fencing, skirting or other suitable security barriers shall be installed where required by the fire code official.

Larger solar farms that are privately owned are regulated by NFPA 70 Article 691 where additional requirements can be found.

Codes adopted locally under OSSC Section 101.2.1 (7) may have more stringent requirements, including combustible ground cover.

The OFC already has ground cover and vegetation which must be acceptable to the fire code official under 1205.5.1. The fire code official should consider that many PV arrays are installed on leased property under the condition that it be returned to its original state at the end of the agreement.

Solar installations are rapidly growing throughout Oregon and will undoubtedly touch all jurisdictions over time. What is most alarming is the incidence of outdoor ground-mounted solar system fires has been outpacing the growth in installations. The fire loss prompted the insurance industry to study the common failures and distribute recommendations to mitigate the risk and reduce fire loss. See the white paper [here](#).

It is important to the local fire code official to become familiar with the risk, the available code requirements to mitigate that risk and implement effective strategies to enforce the adopted codes.

REGISTER FOR UPCOMING SAFETY TRAINING

The Oregon Department of Transportation and DMV Traffic Safety Office is offering a 16-hour Prehospital Trauma Life Support (PHTLS) Provider Course aimed at strengthening the skills of rural emergency responders.

This course is designed for EMTs, paramedics, nurses, and other prehospital providers, focusing on improving care for vehicle crash victims, reducing crash scene times, and supporting EMS professionals in maintaining their licenses.

The course fee is \$75 and includes the 10th Edition PHTLS Provider Manual and Workbook. Upon successful completion, participants will earn a PHTLS provider certificate, a wallet card valid for four years, and 16 hours of CAPCE credit. Registration links are below, and lunch is included. For more information, contact info@oregonems.org.

September 7 & 8, 2024

Central Cascade Fire and EMS
20400 Crescent Lake Hwy
Crescent Lake, OR 97733

[Register Here](#)

September 14 & 15, 2024

Gearhart Fire Department
670 Pacific Way
Gearhart, Or, 97138

[Register Here](#)



OREGON EMS CONFERENCE REGISTRATION OPEN

The Oregon EMS Conference is back, offering three dynamic days of learning, networking, and professional development. Hosted at the Holiday Inn Portland - I-5 S (Wilsonville), this event is tailored for both seasoned EMS professionals and those new to the field. Attendees can look forward to engaging sessions led by industry experts, opportunities to connect with peers, and practical insights that will enhance their skills in emergency medical services. Whether attending in person or virtually, this conference is an excellent chance to stay updated on the latest in EMS. For more details, visit [Oregon EMS Conference](#).

WELCOME TO THE TEAM!



Dan Giles is the OSFM's new hazmat rail trainer, focusing on the triennial exercise cycle as outlined by House Bill 2209. Born and raised in the Willamette Valley, Dan has 30 years of public service experience, including 18 years as a firefighter with Eugene Springfield Fire, where he also served as the training captain for the Region 2 Hazmat Team. Outside of work, Dan enjoys mountain biking and backpacking with his family

Amber Allen joins the OSFM as the new safety and risk manager after 15 years as a risk manager with Oregon Parks and Recreation. With 20 years in state government, Amber brings a wealth of experience in risk and safety management. She holds a degree in administration of justice from Portland State University. Amber, a native Oregonian, is passionate about creating a safe environment for employees and communities alike.



Casey Cioffi is the newest healthcare surveyor in the OSFM's Fire and Life Safety Division. Previously with the CR2K Program and OSP, Casey has a strong background in ensuring fire and life safety in healthcare facilities. She lives in Aumsville with her husband and a menagerie of pets, and they enjoy camping, fishing, and running a small butchering business. Casey is eager to take on the challenges of her new role.

Renee Tokarchuk has joined the OSFM as a fire and life safety education office specialist. A Washington native with a background in linguistics, she previously worked as a substitute teacher for the Salem Keizer School District. Renee is excited to contribute to OSFM and enjoys reading, tea, and exploring the Pacific Northwest with her family.

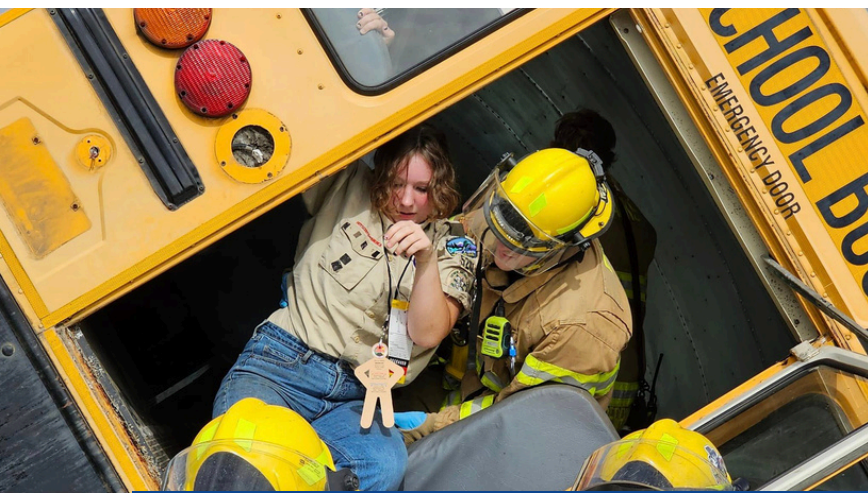


Shane Wooten is the OSFM's new incident management team program coordinator, following a 32-year career with the Albany Fire Department, where he served as fire chief. Shane is a graduate of Oregon State University and the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. He has extensive experience with incident management teams and looks forward to supporting them in his new role. In his spare time, Shane enjoys outdoor activities and spending time with family.

Sydney Smith joins the OSFM as an Operations & Policy Analyst 2, supporting analytics in the Fire & Life Safety Education and Regulatory Services divisions. With a background in nonprofit analytics, Sydney holds degrees in microbiology, nutritional science, and public health from UC Berkeley. Originally from Medford, Oregon, she's excited to be back in her home state after a decade in the Bay Area.



Hanna Lee is the OSFM's new business analyst, bringing extensive experience in IT and project management from her work with major telecom companies like T-Mobile and AT&T. Originally from Eugene, Oregon, she has a passion for travel, nature, and music, having created a children's album and related projects inspired by her adventures. Hanna is excited to contribute her skills to OSFM and explore Oregon with her two German Shorthair Pointers, Luke and Lucy.



FROM THE **INTERNET**

On August 25, Banks Fire crews, along with Life Flight Network, Mid-Columbia Bus Company, Gales Creek Towing, and the Boy Scouts of America, conducted a mass casualty bus accident drill at the Hornshuh Creek Station. The exercise was designed to prepare and train for large-scale emergencies.

The public was advised not to call 911 or stop along the highway, but those interested in observing were welcome to watch from the station's parking lot.

[Check out more photos here.](#)

INTERESTING RESCUE

It's not a cat in a tree, but an opossum in the house.

On August 2, the Grants Pass 911 Communications received an unusual call—a homeowner reported an opossum inside their house.

Grants Pass Engine 7308 (Parkway) responded quickly and safely captured the little critter.

The opossum was then released back into the wild, showing that our fire crews are prepared for any kind of rescue, even when it's not your typical cat-in-a-tree scenario. [See the 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 specialist
Kassondra.Keller@osfm.oregon.gov

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

Follow Us



[The OSFM on X](#)



[The OSFM on Facebook](#)



[The OSFM on Instagram](#)