

DRAFT 2

## Wildfire knows no season

[Release date: 05-02-16]

Contact: Kristin Babbs, president  
Keep Oregon Green Association  
503-945-7499, [Kristin.a.babbs@oregon.gov](mailto:Kristin.a.babbs@oregon.gov)

May is Oregon Wildfire Awareness Month. Oregon experiences its heaviest wildfire activity during the summer, but fires occur all seasons of the year including spring. During May, federal, state, tribal and local fire agencies will be spreading the word about wildfire prevention and the steps Oregonians can take to stop most fires before they start.

### **At stake: lives, property, forests**

When it comes to preventing wildfires, there's a lot at stake – lives, personal property, and the many values provided by Oregon's forests and rangelands. During the 2015 wildfire season, about 1.6 million acres were consumed by wildfire across the Pacific Northwest, including 630,000 acres in Oregon. Some 675 structures were lost - many of them permanent residences. And tragically, three firefighters were killed. Key wildlife habitats, including those of the beleaguered greater sage grouse, went up in smoke.

In Oregon alone, some 850 human-caused fires ravaged the landscape. And on just the forest and rangelands protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry, these "people" fires burned nearly 87,000 acres. But wildfire prevention educators are not pointing fingers. In the extreme weather conditions of last summer nearly any fire start, whether human or lightning caused, had potential to spread into a raging wildfire.

### **Wildfires can start at home**

Wildfires that occur in the wildland-urban interface often are started by human activity and then spread to the forest. Once underway a fire follows the fuel, whether it is trees or houses. Fortunately, this grave threat to lives and property can be dramatically reduced.

"Simple prevention strategies will make the strongest impact on your home, family and community safety," said Kristin Babbs, president of the Keep Oregon Green Association.

Spring is the perfect time, she said, to remove dead, flammable vegetation and limb up trees around the yard.

"When clearing brush and vegetation from around the home, property owners should also keep in mind the access needed by larger fire trucks," said State Fire Marshal Jim Walker. "Long driveways should be at least 12 feet wide, have 10 feet of vegetation clearance from the centerline to the edge of the driveway, and about 14 feet of overhead clearance. Having an adequate turnaround area is critical for firefighter."

To get an early start on Wildfire Awareness Month, join your neighbors in reducing your community's wildfire risk by taking part in National Wildfire Community Preparedness Day on Saturday, May 7. The National Fire Protection Association has teamed up with State Farm Insurance to encourage residents to

commit a couple of hours, or the entire day, to help raise wildfire awareness and work together on projects that can help protect homes and entire communities from the threat of fire.

**Coming soon: More Wildfire Awareness Month tips**

During May, Keep Oregon Green will promote a new wildfire prevention message via traditional and social media each week to help homeowners and recreationists learn how to ensure their outdoor activities do not spark the next wildfire. For more information, visit these websites: Keep Oregon Green, [www.keeporegongreen.org](http://www.keeporegongreen.org); Oregon Dept. of Forestry, [www.oregon.gov/odf](http://www.oregon.gov/odf); Office of the State Fire Marshal, [www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/pages/index.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/pages/index.aspx)

Follow Oregon wildfire news and prevention updates on social media: Twitter @keeporegongreen, @ORDeptForestry and Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/keeporegongreen>; <https://www.facebook.com/odfprevention/?fref=ts>

###