

FIREBRAND

SPRING 2011

PUBLISHED BY THE ROGUE VALLEY FIRE PREVENTION COOPERATIVE

BALANCING ACT: Debris Burning and Clean Air

By BILL KETTLER

SPRING IS THE TIME WHEN LOTS OF us who live in rural areas want to burn brush and other woody debris that accumulated over the winter. Sometimes we get frustrated when air pollution regulations don't allow us to burn, and it can be downright upsetting when conditions allow foresters to torch their big burns, but the rest of us aren't supposed to burn our little debris piles.

There are good reasons for the rules that regulate open burning in Southern Oregon, but like so many aspects of modern life, the process is way more complicated than anyone would like it to be. To understand how it's supposed to work, you have to learn a little about meteorology. You also have to appreciate the differences between the burning that happens on forest land and the burning we do around our homes.

Burning is limited to minimize air pollution and comply with federal pollution laws. When there's ample wind, smoke particles get distributed in the atmosphere, but when the air is stagnant, smoke tends to collect at low elevations and drift downhill, which means hazy skies around Medford, Central Point and Grants Pass. That haze can be a real health hazard to people with asthma, emphysema or other breathing disorders, so burning is restricted in what's called the Air Quality Maintenance Area, which generally includes the towns along Bear Creek, as well as Eagle Point, White City, and the surrounding suburbs.

Most burning on forest land happens at higher elevations than our individual debris fires. At higher altitudes, there's usually more wind, which helps smoke from forest burning dissipate into the atmosphere, says Nick Yonker, a meteorologist for the Oregon Department of Forestry.

Forest burning "is a different



animal," Yonker says. "What happens in the forest isn't always what happens on the valley floor."

Atmospheric conditions that allow good smoke mixing begin to improve in March, as the days get longer. More sunshine helps break up the inversions that are so common in winter, and there's better mixing in the atmosphere, says Ryan Sandler, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service office in Medford.

The weather service plays the crucial role in determining which days are suitable for burning. Every morning the weather service sends a balloon high into the atmosphere to determine how the air will mix by late afternoon. That information helps

them determine something called the "ventilation index." When the index is above 400, burning is allowed.

Other factors influence that decision, too. A few years ago, local fire chiefs asked the weather service to account for afternoon winds in the burn/no-burn forecast, because some people don't pay careful attention to their debris fires. Sometimes those burns escape when the wind picks up, scorching pastures and threatening homes and other structures.

"Based on (atmospheric) mixing alone, we would have more burn days," Sandler says, but the ventilation index is especially sensitive to wind.

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Fire-resistant plants *are beautiful*

Many ground cover plants, perennials, shrubs and trees are naturally resistant to fire, and are good choices for landscaping around homes in urban-fringe and rural areas where wildfires occur. Some, like iris (above), are both fire-resistant and deer-resistant.

In general, fire-resistant plants have the following characteristics:

- Leaves are moist and supple
- Plants have little dead wood and tend not to accumulate dry, dead material within the plant
- Sap is water-like and does not have a strong odor
- Sap or resin materials are low

Bear in mind that a fire-resistant plant is not fireproof. Keep all of your landscaping plants healthy with appropriate watering, proper pruning, mulching around the roots, and other principles of good plant care.

To get a copy of "Fire-Resistant Plants for Home Landscapes," visit your local Oregon Department of Forestry or OSU Extension Service office. Or download a copy from rvfpc.com.



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Two Shady Cove Neighborhoods Get Firewise Communities Recognition

Ashland and Grants Pass start Firewise programs

From Grants Pass to Ashland, and from Selma to Shady Cove, ordinary people are working together to protect their homes from wildfire.

Some have already joined Firewise, a national effort to promote wildfire awareness and safety. Others are removing flammable vegetation around their homes on their own or with financial assistance from the Oregon Department of Forestry.

Firewise encourages people to take responsibility for wildfire protection, said Ali True, Firewise coordinator for Ashland Fire/Rescue.

"It's really about neighbors working together with neighbors," she said.

Neighborhoods in Shady Cove have already earned Firewise designation, and Ashland and Grants Pass have identified neighborhoods where Firewise principles could be used to reduce the risk of uncontrollable wildfire.

Firewise works like this: experienced firefighters visit a neighborhood and prepare an assessment of what should be done to reduce the risk of wildfire engulfing homes. They look at things like vegetation, construction materials, and road access for fire engines. Neighbors then decide how to implement the recommendations. They might choose to hire people to remove dangerous vegetation or do it themselves, or create their own mix of paid and volunteer workers.

"The great thing about this is it encourages people to make their own solutions," True said.

Fire awareness in Ashland remains high after last summer's Oak Knoll fire, which burned 11 nearby homes. Residents of the Oak Knoll Meadows subdivision, which was adjacent to the fire area, decided to join the Firewise effort after seeing for themselves how quickly flames can advance.

Several houses in the Oak Knoll Meadows development narrowly escaped destruction in last summer's fire, said Allen Baker, president of the neighborhood homeowners association and its Firewise board of directors.

"That put us on notice" that something needed to be done, Baker said.

True and Brian Ballou, from the Oregon Department of Forestry, visited the subdivision and emphasized the need to remove concentrations of Leyland cypress trees that had originally been planted as privacy screens and sound barriers. The trees are highly flammable in hot dry weather, and many had grown too close to homes. If they were to burn, wind-driven embers could quickly spread the flames to buildings.

Some of the Leyland cypresses have already come down, and there are plans to remove others, using funds from the neighborhood association's funds for maintaining its common areas.

True said Oak Knoll Meadows will likely gain Firewise certification by late spring or early summer.

Neighborhoods on the west side of Ashland and in the central part of the city are also taking steps to become Firewise certified. The city also has created a Firewise commission that will oversee the neighborhoods' efforts and eventually unite them over time. Membership on the commission is open to all Ashland city residents. People who want to know more can contact True at (541) 552-2231.

Shady Cove

This small town along the Rogue River is surrounded by forestland, and residents have been working since June 2009 to make their homes Firewise.

Two Shady Cove neighborhoods have already gained Firewise certification - the area from Shady Cove School to the north city limits, and the area around the airport on the west end of town. Volunteers are working to bring other neighborhoods into the fold, but teaching people that they need to prepare on their own for a fire can be challenging.

"A lot of people think that because they live in a city it's the fire department's job to protect them," said Paula Trudeau, a board member of Shady Cove Firewise Communities. "They think if a wildfire comes, the fire department will protect them."

Unfortunately, Shady Cove has just four paid firefighters - not nearly enough to protect homes during any big wildfire.

Trudeau knows from personal experience the danger wildfire presents for rural and suburban homeowners. She saw hundreds of homes burn in Southern California when she worked for the U.S. Forest Service.

"I've seen a lot of destruction in neighborhoods that weren't prepared," she said, recalling houses next to freeways that were totally destroyed.

"There was nothing left of some cars but metal shells," she said.

Convincing homeowners to thin vegetation around their homes can be difficult because people tend to think fire only happens "somewhere else."

"People think you're being an alarmist" to talk about fire danger, she said, but that's often because many of them have little personal experience with fire. She estimated that about half of Shady Cove's 2,100 residents have no experience with fire in the forestland that encircles Shady Cove.

The city is seeking federal grant money to hire someone to visit homeowners and talk with them about how to make their home less vulnerable to wildland fire.

The city also plans to thin vegetation along Old Ferry Road and Aunt Caroline's Park to reduce the likelihood of fire starting in those well-used areas.

Grants Pass

Wildfires have burned close to Grants Pass in recent years, and firefighters have identified several neighborhoods where flames could threaten homes.



If a grant proposal for federal funding gains approval, city Fire Marshal Brian Pike said a coordinator for the city's Firewise project could be on the job as soon as July.

Pike said neighborhoods that are vulnerable to wildfire include parts of the city's extreme northeast (around Terrace and Hillcrest drives) and the northwest area around Starlight Drive. Those areas have steep slopes where flames could move rapidly, and the city limits in some neighborhoods butt up to forest land.

Wildfire burned in the Scenic Drive area in 2007, Pike said, and small fires periodically pop up along Interstate 5 on the northern edge of town during the summer months. Most of them are quickly suppressed, but homes near the freeway are especially vulnerable to fires like the one that destroyed 11 houses in Ashland in the



summer of 2010, Pike said.

The Grants Pass City Council has approved the request for federal funds, and the city should know whether the grant wins approval sometime in March. Funds would be used to hire a Firewise coordinator, who would work with residents to make their homes and neighborhoods less likely to burn when a fire starts.

Pike said homeowners don't need to sacrifice their landscaping and give up an attractive yard to make their residence fire-resistant.

"You're not going to have to clearcut your property," he said. ■

FIREBRAND

SPRING 2011

The *Firebrand* is published by the Rogue Valley Fire Prevention Cooperative (RVFPC), a 501 (c) 4 nonprofit corporation.

The *Firebrand's* editorial content supports the mission of RVFPC, and the outreach and education action items in the Jackson County Integrated Fire Plan and the Josephine County Integrated Fire Plan. Articles also highlight projects that protect homes and wildlands from wildfire, and promote healthy, productive wildland environments.

The *Firebrand* also supports emergency preparedness for families, pets and livestock, and provides information about preventing fires inside the home.

Support YOUR community. Become a fire department volunteer today!

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To have a name and address added or removed from the mailing list, please call Brian Ballou at (541) 664-3328, or send an e-mail to rvfireprev@gmail.com, or write to the address below.

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New Publications!

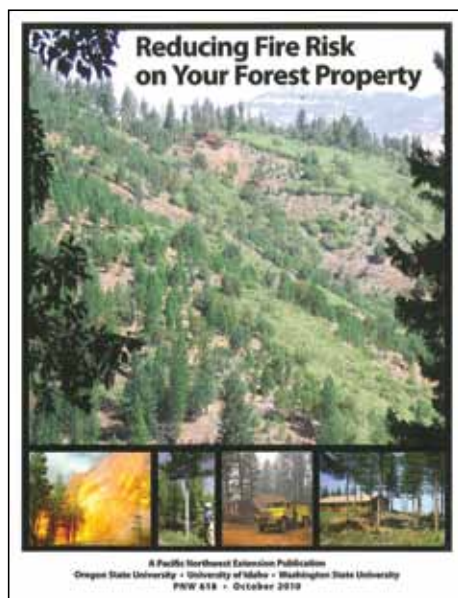
Reducing Fire Risk on Your Forest Property (PNW 618)

Published by Pacific Northwest Extension
October 2010, 40 pages, illustrated

This comprehensive Extension publication covers fire risk, fuel and fire behavior, principles of fire-resistant forests, methods of fuel reduction, creating fuel breaks, road access for emergency vehicles, water sources, and many other related topics. Also included are three case examples of how landowners in Oregon have created fire-safe properties. This publication is intended for forest landowners and forestry and fire professionals. It can be downloaded for free at www.ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/handle/1957/19402

You can download the complete publication or individual sections.

The publication was reviewed by Oregon Department of Forestry, Washington Department of Natural Resources, and Idaho Department of Lands forestry and fire officials and



was published by Extension Service Programs of Oregon State University, Washington State University, and the University of Idaho.

A limited number of printed copies are available, for a modest fee, at the Oregon State University Extension Service, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point. ■

Ready Book

Jackson and Josephine Counties Vulnerable Populations Committee

February 2009, waterproof

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BALANCING ACT – continued from page 1

“You may have a deep blue-sky day with great mixing, but the winds are too strong, and fires could escape so it becomes a no-burn day,” he explains.

Public burning days have to have enough atmospheric mixing to dissipate smoke from what could be hundreds of different points – each of our little burn piles across Jackson County.

“When the county says it’s a no-burn day, they’re trying to cut down on all those little sources that could fill up the valley with smoke,” Yonker says.

Forest burning, although it may cover a large number of acres, often occurs at a single site, where the wind direction and mixing height in the atmosphere are more easily determined.

“That will drive our decision (to burn) independent of what goes on on the valley floor,” Yonker says. “If the smoke (from forest burning) is expected to move away (from the air quality maintenance area) then we burn,”

Unfortunately that distinction is often lost on the public, Yonker said, especially when people see a large column of smoke from a forestry controlled burn on days when they

can’t light their own little fire. Or on those days when the predicted wind direction changes, and smoke from a big burn drifts into the valley floor.

“No one’s happy when that happens,” says Jackson Baures, the county’s environmental public health division manager.

For forest managers, fire is the most inexpensive way to dispose of logging slash, and the brush that’s cut to reduce the risk of fire around rural homes

“Much of the burning we do is (part of) hazard reduction,” Yonker said. “We don’t want to see a wildfire taking off because of slash accumulation. We’ve got to burn when it’s not going to be a hazard.”

The wind and rain factors

Burn/no burn calculations can get pretty technical, says Ryan Sandler, National Weather Service



Compost Corner

TIPS FROM THE BIN

By RHIANNA SIMES
OSU EXTENSION SERVICE



MANY OF US ARE FEELING INSPIRED to start cleaning up around our properties, however, a lot of us still have to deal with last season’s leaves. For folks who raked leaves all fall and piled them, now realize that spring



approaches and something has to be done with them! However, many of us are familiar with the smell and smoke generated from burning soggy piles of leaves once the rains ease up, but there are more options than you might think. Here are a few opportunities for free, cheap, and creative ways to dispose of unwanted, left-over leaves...

- Keep the leaves dry in bags and save them for your compost when you need some extra Carbon
- Use the leaves as mulch in your garden beds or around established trees
- Insulate cold frames to keep the warmth in, and the cold out, to protect your baby garden starts
- Layer them with organic waste that will rot fast, cover from the rain, and let compost happen
- Drop off your leaves for free at the Rogue Disposal Transfer Station (8001 Table Rock Rd)
- Post your leaves on the “Leaf Exchange Program.” See below for more details

Leaf Exchange Program – Jackson County Air Quality: The Leaf Exchange Program gives residents an alternative to burning leaves, which contributes to particulate matter and other pollutants in the air. Jackson County Air Quality compiles a contact list of people who have leaves to dispose of, and another list of those who are looking for leaves to make compost. Leaf donors and leaf recipients can then contact each other to arrange for pick up and delivery of the leaves. To add your name to the list, contact Jackson County Air Quality, 541.774.8207.

For questions or comments, e-mail rhianna.simes@oregonstate.edu



meteorologist. Factors such as recent rainfall, wind direction and speed are all considered.

For example, if the wind at the Medford airport is expected to be 15

weather service does the forecasting and then uses a spreadsheet to do the calculations for a burn or no-burn day based on the amount of ventilation and wind speed forecast.

Counties can modify some parts of the rules. Josephine County does not use the strong wind component if the wind is blowing out of the southeast, because it’s assumed wind from that direction doesn’t blow into their valleys. The minimum ventilation needed for a burn day, as an example, would be a 4,000 feet mixing layer and a 10 mph wind in the afternoon

mph or more in the afternoon then it’s a no-burn day because open burning can take off and spread. If the wind is forecast between 11 and 14 mph then it’s a no-burn day if it has been nearly dry for the past 2 days. If there has been more than .10 inch of rain in the past 2 days then it can be a burn day as long as the ventilation is good. The

The number of good ventilation days does go up dramatically in the spring compared to the winter because of the strengthening sunshine and shorter nights which lead to weaker temperature inversions and greater atmospheric mixing in the afternoon. Based on mixing alone we would have more burn days, but there is also a strong wind component that is part of the burn/no burn decision tree. The ventilation index is especially sensitive to wind. A 10 mph wind will double the index compared to 5 mph. So, you may have deep blue sky day with great mixing but the winds are too strong and fires could escape so it becomes a no burn day. ■

Protecting the Watershed Against WILDFIRE

By BILL KETTLER

WORKERS ARE THINNING TREES AND CLEARING BRUSH in Ashland's municipal watershed to reduce the risk of fire in the forests that provide the city's drinking water.

Recent fires around Ashland, including the Oak Knoll Fire last summer, have shown how quickly flames can move. Firefighters and forest managers have long sought to thin trees and brush in the 14,000-acre watershed to protect against a catastrophic fire that could alter the landscape for decades and likely compromise the quality of Ashland's water supply. A fire of that magnitude could also threaten homes and other buildings in and around the city.

"We're creating vibrant forests and giving space to the (mature) pines and Douglas firs," said Chris Chambers, a forest resource specialist for Ashland Fire & Rescue, the city fire department. The fire department is partnering with the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, the Nature Conservancy and Lomakatsi in what has come to be called the Ashland Forest Resiliency Project.

Chambers said fire was a frequent visitor in the watershed before European settlers came to Southern Oregon in the 1850s. Scientists have studied fire scars on tree trunks and determined that fire burned within the watershed every eight to 15 years. Those periodic fires removed brush and small trees, but fire has largely been suppressed since the settlers' arrival.

"Some of the fire scars go back to the 1600s," he said. Some of those fires were caused by lightning. Others were set by American Indians, who set fires periodically to make better forage for the animals they hunted. Some of those fires moved into the forests that would eventually become the watershed.

Lightning still strikes in the watershed almost every summer, Chambers said, but now much of the watershed is crowded with too many small trees and overgrown with thick brush. Land managers fear a major wildfire could race through much of the watershed, leaving bare ground. Erosion could degrade water quality, and without tree cover, winter snows might melt quicker, leaving less water for the city during the hot dry months of August and September.

Chambers said workers from Lomakatsi Restoration Project are focusing on the west side of the watershed, especially the area around the end of Granite Street and



continuing toward Ostrich Peak and the old Skyline Mine. That's the area with the most human use, he said, which makes it the most likely to have a human-caused fire.

Chambers said workers are removing brush and the lower branches of trees – what foresters call "ladder fuels" because they carry flames up into the main branches of larger trees. The brush and limbs are being



piled and covered for burning when conditions are appropriate.

The project differs from many thinning programs in that it's removing some trees large enough to be milled into lumber. Those trees will be lifted out with a helicopter to reduce damage to the soils in the watershed.

Chambers said pre-settlement forests had many fewer trees per acre than we're accustomed to seeing today. Scientists have determined there were as few as 30 to 50 trees per acre in many areas, which would mean large chunks of open space between each tree. Our contemporary forests are much more crowded, he said, and forests that have been thinned to pre-settlement densities can look almost barren to contemporary viewers, he said.

"Our generation has grown up with dense overstocked forests," he explained, and the thinning "is definitely going to raise some eyebrows. We're not used to seeing what the data says these forests looked like not that long ago."

The final plan for Ashland Forest



The Lomakatsi Restoration Project coordinates pile burning (above) to consume vegetation and reduce fire danger. Job Council crews (left) are helping out with brush piling and are gaining work experience on the Ashland Forest Resiliency Project. Also, Ashland High School students (right) learn about forest ecology through AFR project education efforts. All photos courtesy of Lomakatsi Restoration Project.



Ladder Fuels

Most wildfires start on the ground in leaves, needles and dry grass, and will spread up through the lower branches of overhanging shrubs and trees. These low-hanging branches are called ladder fuels. The way to prevent fire from climbing up this ladder is to remove the lowest branches from the shrub or tree, especially if the branches are dead.

Resiliency Project was developed over years of discussions among forest managers, city officials and concerned citizens. The watershed, which encompasses about 22 square miles, lies within the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, on the slopes generally south and west of the city limits. It's a unique landscape in many ways, said Marty Main, a consulting forester who has helped manage 645 acres of city-owned land within the watershed for the past 16 years.

Main said the watershed still includes some areas of old-growth forest, and it's home to a thriving population of northern spotted owls, a species that has been at the center of the debate over forest management in the Northwest for more than two decades. The watershed also has a population of Pacific fishers, a secretive weasel-like mammal whose numbers have declined across the region as its old-growth habitat was cut down.

Main said the watershed also includes a wide range of forest types across its 22 square miles because it spans an area from 2,200 feet elevation

to the 7,500-foot summit of Mount Ashland.

"There are profound changes in vegetation over a short (range) of land," Main said.

The final thinning plan was developed over about five years after extensive input from people in Ashland, a community known for its wide range of social and political views. The Forest Service adopted the community plan under provisions of the federal Healthy Forest Restoration Act, which gives local people a voice in forest planning on nearby federal lands.

To accomplish the plan, the Forest Service partnered with The Nature Conservancy, Lomakatsi and the city of Ashland.

"It's kind of a unique approach," Main said, "but it's a unique piece of real estate."

The Nature Conservancy will monitor the project to see how it meets goals set by community members to maintain water quality and aquatic

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Herbicide Use Tips, Do's and Don'ts

CLEARING VEGETATION AROUND YOUR home is an important step toward protecting it against wildfire, but it's only the first part of the job.

The trees and brush you remove will likely send up fresh shoots from the roots within a year or two. If you ignore them, you'll face another major cleanup job before too long. You can hack them down with hand tools and a chainsaw, but you might want to consider judicious use of herbicides to give them a knockout blow.

"Once you do the fuel reduction, you've got to maintain it," says Steve Wetmore, a stewardship forester who works out of the Grants Pass office of the state Department of Forestry. "People tend to think they've got the job done, but if you don't maintain it, it comes back with a vengeance a year or two later and you've got to do it again."

Wetmore says madrones are especially eager to send up fresh stems from their roots. Blackberries are also happy to resprout from root fragments left underground, and so will scotch broom, another invasive and highly flammable plant that continues to spread across Jackson and Josephine counties.

"You can get 15 sprouts from one madrone," Wetmore says.

Herbicides can be safe and effective when they're applied according to manufacturer's instructions, says Max Bennett, extension forester at the Southern Oregon Research and Extension Center in Central Point.

Judicious use of herbicides can be safe in terms of low risk to the applicator and the environment if it's done carefully," Bennett says. He notes that many landowners may be reluctant to use chemicals because of environmental concerns or their unfamiliarity with the products, but in many ways, herbicides are the most cost effective way to control unwanted vegetation.

The key to success is to follow the instructions on the label, he stresses. "As basic as that sounds, the label is the law," he says. Herbicide labels always include information about mixing instructions, as well as application rates, and when to use the chemicals for best effect.

One common mistake he sees people make is to add more chemical than the label calls for.

"They think if the label rate is good, then a little more is better," he says, "but that's probably not the case, and it can actually be counter-productive."

When the plant gets too much of



When using herbicides, follow the product use and safety instructions on the label. Protect the work area from unintended exposure by putting all chemicals and chemical application materials in waterproof containers, and using tarps for covering the ground where sprayers will be filled.

the active chemical on its leaves, it may not transfer the substance to the roots, (a process called translocation) where it shuts down the plant.

"More is not better," Bennett says. "It's also more expensive."

SPRAYING AT THE RIGHT TIME MAKES all the difference, Bennett says.

Generally, sprays should be applied when woody perennial plants such as blackberries and poison oak are fully leafed out. Spraying in early spring when the leaves are just coming out may kill the leaves, but it won't necessarily get the chemicals down to the roots. Spraying too late in the summer or in the fall isn't effective because the plants are shutting down for winter and no longer sending energy down to the roots

That means spraying poison oak before the leaves begin to turn red, which can be as early as August in some parts of Southern Oregon.

The window for spraying herbaceous plants, such as weeds, is broader, Bennett says. "Almost any time during the growing season, herbicides can be effective."

Anyone spraying even small amounts of herbicides should protect themselves against exposure. For protection against the chemicals that are commonly available in stores, that usually means nothing more than wearing long sleeved shirts, pants, sturdy shoes and rubber gloves (not leather, because the chemicals will be absorbed by the leather).

Again, Bennett stresses, herbicide labels carry important information about safety precautions. Some formulations of the Garlon herbicide, for example, can damage eyes, and should be applied only with eye protection.

Wind can be an issue when

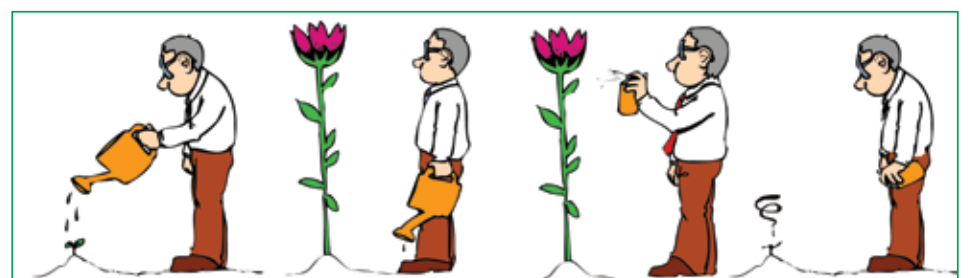


spraying, especially if herbicides are blown toward sensitive garden plants or grape vines. Spraying should be done when the air is calm. Spraying near streams requires special attention because some herbicides can be toxic to aquatic organisms. Generally Wetmore suggests not spraying within 10 to 20 feet of streams to eliminate any possibility of contamination.

People who aren't familiar with herbicides can get information on how to use them from garden stores where clerks have extensive knowledge, or on the Internet. A wealth of information is available from Oregon State University, including its Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook, which is available online at: weeds.ippc.orst.edu/pnw/weeds. (Be aware - chapters in this book are available as PDF files and can take some time to transfer to your computer). Older editions are also often available in print at stores that specialize in used books.

For large-scale applications of herbicide, commercial forestry operators have to file notification with the Department of Forestry, but homeowners typically use herbicides on such a small scale that they need not worry about filing any paperwork.

Homeowners who have questions about herbicides can contact the Oregon Department of Forestry in Central Point at (541) 664-3328, or in Grants Pass at (541) 474-3152. ■



Fuel Reduction Assistance Grants Available for Illinois Valley Residents

WHEN THE BISCUIT FIRE RAGED across Southern Oregon during the summer of 2002, many Illinois Valley residents had good reason to fear they might lose their homes to the flames. Now there's financial assistance for "IV" folks who want to make their homes less vulnerable to wildfire.

The Illinois Valley Community Development Organization has grant money that will pay as much as half of the cost of creating a defensible space around homes and driveways in the southern part of the valley. Kamron Ismaili, the district's fire prevention officer, said funds are available for homeowners from the 27000 block of Highway 199 to the California/Oregon state line, and for the same areas along Rockydale and Takilma roads.

"We live in a high-risk area," Ismaili said, noting the region's heavy ground vegetation and its hot, dry summers. "As much fuel reduction as we do, fire's still going to happen."

Under the program, Ismaili visits a home and writes a "prescription" for removing flammable vegetation that could endanger the structure during a wildfire. He also evaluates road access, and determines what might plants or trees might need to be removed to make sure firefighters can reach the home safely. The homeowner can choose who to hire to do the work, and the fire grant will provide up to 50 percent reimbursement when the work meets Ismaili's prescription.

"Each home is different," he said. "Some require minimal fuel reduction."

The 50/50 shared cost arrangement gives homeowners a sense of commitment to the project, he said.

"You have to have some kind of buy-in from home owners," he said.

Additional grant proposals have been written that would provide financial assistance for homeowners to remove brush around homes from Cave Junction nearly all the way to Selma, Ismaili said. The fire district should know by the beginning of fire season whether they've been approved. (Fire season typically starts mid-June.)



The 2005 Deer Creek Fire quickly threatened many homes, barns and other outbuildings, but defensible space around many homes helped firefighters to keep losses to a minimum.

The proposals have been submitted through the Illinois Valley Community Development Organization.

Although the Biscuit Fire filled the sky with smoke and ash just six years ago, Ismaili said memories of it are already fading fast, and he has to constantly educate people about the need to create a defensible space around their homes.

"Once a fire's gone, people tend to forget very quickly," he said.

It's not as though wildfire disappeared after the Biscuit. More recently, the area has seen two other major fires – the Lone Mountain and Deer Creek blazes.

"I try to educate every one of them when I go out to their house," he said, to encourage them to maintain the defensible space they have created.

"If they don't, the vegetation will be back in five years."

Funds for fuels reduction are currently available for homeowners from the 27000 block of Highway 199 south to the California/Oregon border, and the Rockydale and Takilma roads to the state line. The fire district will reimburse homeowners for up to half the cost of fuel reduction.

To arrange an appointment with Kamron Ismaili, IV fire protection specialist, call (541) 592-2225. ■

WILDFIRE

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habitat and preserve large trees. Monitors recorded baseline data in 2010 that includes information on populations of birds, aquatic invertebrates, stream sediment, and a number of other factors. Monitors will revisit the same sites over the years to see how the work on the ground has affected soils, wildlife and plants.

Returning to the same sites over the years to measure changes will help judge the effectiveness of the thinning, said Kerry Metlen, a forest ecologist for The Nature Conservancy.

Funding for the thinning comes

from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, more commonly known as the "federal stimulus money" approved by Congress after the economic collapse. Chambers said the stimulus money will provide about \$6.5 million for thinning in the watershed over the next few years – many times more than the Forest Service would normally have for such work. That will allow crews to do some thinning on about half the watershed's total acreage.

The ultimate goal is to try to prevent a devastating wildfire like the one that broke out just north of town in 1959 and threatened the city before it was contained. ■



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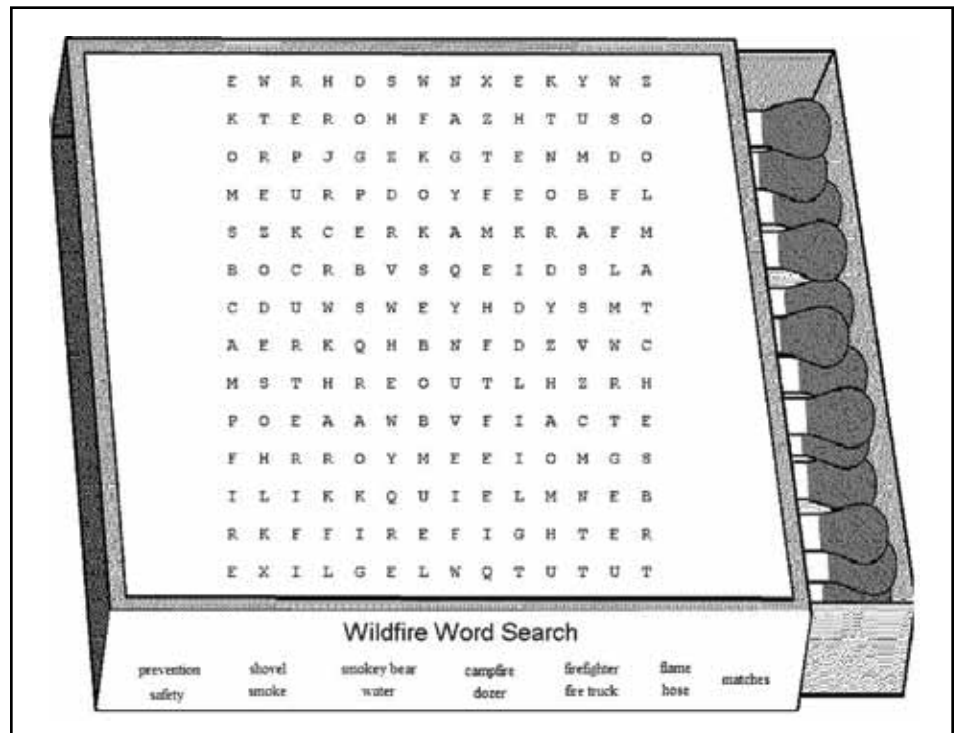
Prevent Dryer Fires



Every year, nearly 13,000 clothes dryer fires occur in the United States. Fortunately, most dryer fires can be averted by annually cleaning the appliance and its ducting. It is also important to use solid metal ducting rather than flexible ducting, which tends to collect larger quantities of lint.

Use a vacuum with a long hose to clean the duct pipe. Also, use the vacuum cleaner to suck up lint that may have collected beneath and behind the dryer. On many dryers, it is easy to remove the panel where the lint screen is located. Lint often collects inside the appliance behind and below the lint screen.

If you're uncomfortable with disassembling your appliance, many dryer repair services will perform the cleaning service for you. A repairman can also check the dryer for other problems.



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www.smokeybear.com



How to Keep a Burn Pile Fire from Becoming a Wildfire

ESCAPED OPEN BURNING FIRES ARE a leading cause of wildfires in Jackson and Josephine counties during spring. High temperatures combined with afternoon winds can easily push burn pile and burn barrel fires into nearby dry grass, blackberry bushes and other burnable debris, such as firewood and lumber piles.

Losing control of a backyard burn may result in a citation and a bill for fire suppression costs. Burn only woody debris – cuttings from trees and brush, and dry needles and leaves. Don't burn garbage, plastic, petroleum products, tires, rubber, animal remains or any material which emits dense smoke or noxious odors.

To keep burn pile and burn barrel fires under control:

- Call the county air quality recorded information lines to find out whether burning is allowed. In Jackson County, the number to call is 776-7007. In Josephine County, call 476-WOOD (9663).
- If your local structural fire district requires a burning permit, apply for one before doing any burning and follow the district's instructions for open burning safety.
- Make sure the pile is in a place where flames and heat won't catch adjacent vegetation, structures or other burnable debris on fire. As a rule of thumb, the open space around a burn pile should be twice the distance of the pile's height.
- Make sure there aren't overhead wires or branches that will melt or ignite from the heat rising from the burn pile fire. Allow an open space above the pile that is at least three times the height of the pile.
- Check the weather forecast. If strong or gusty winds are predicted, or if the temperature is to be 80 degrees or higher, strongly consider waiting until another day to burn.
- Have water, a shovel and a rake close at hand. If you're running a garden hose to the burn pile site, add enough extra hose to extend at least 25 feet beyond the pile.
- Never leave a burning debris pile or burn barrel unattended.
- If the fire escapes control, call 9-1-1 immediately.

One other important step is to make sure your fire is completely out. Debris pile and burn barrel fires should be out by nightfall, but always check the burned area the next day for hot embers. This is particularly important as summer approaches and the temperature climbs into the 80s and 90s (or higher). A day or two of



An escaped debris pile fire could cost the person responsible for the fire hundreds if not thousands of dollars in fire suppression costs. Make sure it is a legal burn day before lighting the pile, and that necessary permits have been obtained from your structural fire protection district.

90-degree weather, a breath of hot afternoon breeze, and that patch of blackened ground – where you burned a pile of tree branches a month before – might sprout a few flames.

That same breeze can easily push flames into nearby grass and cause a wildfire.

Embers can survive for days, weeks, even months in roots and other organic matter in the soil. Bark, stumps, leaves and needles all may continue to slowly burn even when completely buried underground.

Spray water on the burned area. If it is still hot, you will see a puff of steam. If the old burn pile site is beyond the reach of a garden hose, pass your hand an inch or two above the black ground. Feel a little heat? Stir the spot with the point of a shovel and test the air above it again. If the air is cooler, there isn't a problem. If it's hotter, it's time to do a little work.



Water is your best friend when burning a pile of tree branches. Make sure you have enough hose to go at least 25 feet beyond the pile. Test the hose before lighting the pile.

To fully extinguish embers, turn the soil with a shovel to expose the hot material. Spray it with water, or slosh some on it from a bucket, and turn the embers to get them really wet. Chop up glowing embers and continue to wet them until they no longer smoke and are cool to the touch.

Don't think that the fire will eventually go out if you just bury it deeper, particularly if the material you're burying is large. Using a backhoe to bury still-smoking stumps and tree boles may be simply postponing the chore of putting out the fire. And if firefighters need to dig up buried debris to put out embers,

they may send you a bill for their heavy-equipment costs.

Call your local fire district or the Oregon Department of Forestry for tips on open burning and how to fully extinguish a burn pile's embers. It is also important to check with your structural fire service provider to see whether a permit is required for open burning in your area. And always call the county open burning line to see whether burning is allowed on a given day.

There are many air-friendly and fire-safe alternatives to burning, such as chipping and composting woody debris. Local waste disposal services have yard debris recycling services available at a reasonable cost. ■

Call Before You Burn

- Jackson County: (541) 776-7007
- Josephine County: (541) 476-WOOD



Burning debris at night may seem like a good idea (especially if you don't have a permit) but it's guaranteed to result in a visit from the fire department. Fire at night is highly visible.

What Not to Burn

According to the Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality, it is illegal to burn the following materials:

- Asbestos
- Asphalt or industrial waste
- Automotive parts (including frames)
- Dead animals
- Plastic
- Rubber Products
- Tires
- Waste oil, petroleum treated and related materials
- Wet garbage and food waste
- Any material creating dense smoke or noxious odors



Use Caution When Burning Blackberries



When large blackberry bushes catch on fire and spread, they are very difficult to stop – even with lots of water

BLACKBERRY FIRES CERTAINLY ARE spectacular! And dangerous, too. So, why do blackberries burn the way they do and why do they resist control efforts?

When one looks at blackberry bushes, they don't exactly conjure up the threat of wildfire. They are green, usually around water such as creeks, drainages, or ponds, and sometimes at the edge of irrigated pastures. The fruit is lush and juicy.

As these plants grow uncontrolled,

they immediately begin to have a vertical component to them. In the forest we call these ladder fuels, because they allow the fire to 'climb' vertically into the upper crowns or canopies of the vegetation. In blackberries, they naturally develop that way.

Next, blackberries seem to have a very effective compactness ratio. The available fuel is nicely spaced in order to allow for a very efficient combustion. They aren't compacted

them. Unless you practice, the animals won't be accustomed to loading, and they could panic during an emergency, threatening their safety and yours.

It's also important to know in advance, too, what route you'll use to leave and where you'll go, Bernhardt said.

Making plans may sound daunting, but the American Veterinary Medical Association has developed a guide that includes comprehensive information about how to prepare for evacuating livestock and pets. "Saving the Whole Family" can be viewed online at the AVMA website -www.avma.org/disaster.

The guide includes basic things like making sure your pets have proper identification (such as an implanted ID chip or a collar with their name, your name and a telephone number). Pets' immunizations should be up-to-date too. Livestock should also be marked, which can be done in a variety of ways, including ear tags, brands, indelible markers, neck chain or band, or tail tag.

Finally, make sure you've made arrangements with a friend or neighbor who can take responsibility for your animals in the event you're away from home when a disaster occurs. ■

Saving the Whole Family

THINGS HAPPEN FAST DURING A FIRE, so it's important for everyone who lives in a rural area to have some kind of plan if they have to leave their home. Trying to make arrangements for livestock and pets at the last minute can be dangerous if it delays your decision to evacuate. When the time comes to leave, there's often no time to lose.

Josephine County is developing a plan for sheltering pets and livestock when a wildfire or other natural disaster forces people to evacuate, but everyone needs to remember that the primary responsibility for their animals lies with them, said Lin Bernhardt, a consultant who's helping organize the plan.

Bernhardt said folks can work together with their neighbors and friends to make evacuation arrangements. That includes knowing how you will move your animals, who you can count on for help and who will need extra help.

"Neighborhood planning is where the rubber meets the road in an emergency," she said. Advance planning also means making sure you have carriers for your pets and a supply of food and water. It means that you've practiced loading your livestock into the trailer or truck you'll use to move

Project Wildfire Survey!



This winter/spring, the Rogue Valley Fire Prevention Cooperative, in partnership with the Research Center at SOU, is conducting a public opinion poll on wildfire issues. The Co-op's members are the many fire districts and fire agencies from across the Jackson-Josephine county area, and together we have been working for more than a decade to help prepare and protect our residents against wildfire events. You may have seen our members at Smokey Bear displays at local fairs, or in neighborhood meetings discussing defensible space, or even at a community gathering place during a wildfire event, answering questions.

We feel that this wildfire public opinion survey will help us better assess local concerns, levels of wildfire preparedness, and viewpoints on local issues. We will focus and plan our future education and prevention activities from the results that we receive from your returned surveys.

This year we have targeted four "communities" in Jackson County (the Greensprings, Ashland, the Seven Basins area, and the Applegate watershed), and three communities in Josephine County (the west side of the Applegate, the Wolf-Creek-Sunny Valley area, and NE Grants Pass). As you read this, several of these communities have already received their surveys. We are already soliciting other communities for participation later in 2011.

Our target this winter is to send surveys to about 30% of a community's residences. The surveys are completely random and voluntary, and responses will completely anonymous. If you're one of the "lucky" ones chosen, we sincerely hope that you'll help us be more effective in our work by filling out and returning the 2011 Wildfire Survey. And, we thank you in advance! ■

– Sandy Shaffer, RVFPC survey project manager

on the ground like forest duff. Therefore, the surface to air ratio is very conducive to burning.

In addition, almost all of the old, dying vegetation from the blackberry plant (leaves and old stems) is never removed. It creates additional dead fuel at the lower part of the plant, thereby providing an ideal place to generate additional heat build-up and sparks to start more of the bushes on fire.

Finally, the live fuel moisture (the

moisture that the plant moves around to survive) is at its lowest point from late summer through early spring, just when you'd think it might be safe to burn them! This moisture is the last defense the plant can use to minimize the intensity in which it burns. When the moisture level is so low, blackberries become very susceptible to burning hot and intense.

Therefore, when large blackberry bushes catch on fire and spread, they are very difficult to stop. Even using large amounts of water isn't totally effective because of the difficulty in getting through the brambles to get water everywhere. It's common to see an inexperienced firefighter knock the flames down and move on, only to have it re-ignite a couple of minutes later. Successful suppression really takes separating the fire from the unburned brush. In the middle of fire season, on large patches, it seems like using a bulldozer is the only effective way to do this.

So, lesson learned: burning blackberries can be a tricky and potentially dangerous task. The most dangerous is burning large patches of berries. It's best to separate the patch into manageable segments that can be more easily controlled, without the risk of burning the entire area all at once.

Be careful and be prepared! ■

– Dan Thorpe, ODF District Forester



Volunteers Needed!

Josephine County is recruiting volunteers for its disaster animal response team (DART). Volunteers will help organize shelters for pets and livestock during an emergency. A training session has been scheduled for April 27-29, at the Medford airport. For more information and to sign up for the training session, visit the website at <http://jocosherriff.us/emergency/animals.html>.



To report a fire,
call 9-1-1