



## News Release

Oregon Department of Forestry  
Southwest Oregon District

November 6, 2020

Oregon Department of Forestry  
Southwest Oregon District  
5286 Table Rock Road  
Central Point, OR 97502

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Natalie Weber, Public Information Officer  
(541) 621-4005 or (541) 664-3328

### **Fire season ends today, but fire prevention continues**

After 190 days, fire season ends today, Friday, November 6, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. on lands protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry's Southwest Oregon District. Lands affected by this declaration include state, private, county, city, and Bureau of Land Management forestlands in Jackson and Josephine counties totaling 1.8 million acres.

This marks the second longest fire season on record on the Southwest Oregon District, only nine days fewer than the longest recorded season from 1988. The preliminary totals for the season show ODF firefighters tackling 220 wildland fires, totaling roughly 40,494 acres. This total fire count does not even include the number of alarms firefighters responded to related to fire restriction violations, assisting our local partners, and smoke chases throughout Jackson and Josephine Counties; crews responded to more than 1,400 calls for service that did not result in fire suppression.

The season began with dry conditions on May 1, 2020, prompting an earlier start than most years. However, it wasn't until late July that the first large fire of the season broke out on the district. The Worthington fire was first reported on July 30, burning 761 acres five miles northeast of Eagle Point. It was followed by the Grizzly Creek fire a mile north of Howard Prairie Lake; that fire was caught at 325 acres.



*The Grizzly Creek Fire*



*ODF's air tanker dropping retardant on the Almeda Fire along I-5 MP 27 on September 8, 2020*

Up until September, these were the largest fires on the district, and less than 1,000 acres had been burned by 162 fires. September 8, 2020 presented firefighters and residents of the Rogue Valley alike with an unprecedented fire event. The Almeda, South Obenchain and Slater fires all broke out on the same day, fueled by an east wind event typically only experienced once every 20 years. The loss of lives, homes and structures will forever be remembered by fire crews.

ODF as an organization was also challenged in a different way this fire season; COVID-19 presented risks to our firefighters and general staff that created an added hurdle to an already difficult and often stressful time. Safety is always a top priority in the agency, and preventative measures were added to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in the district and at fire camps. By following CDC guidelines, including social distancing, wearing masks and sanitizing often, cases were kept at a minimum; According to the Northwest Coordinating Center, there were seven confirmed positive cases of COVID among firefighting resources assigned to Type 1 or Type 2 incidents in the Northwest Region (Oregon and Washington) this fire season. At the peak of the recent firefighting efforts, there were nearly 8,000 people assigned to fires in the region.

Despite the difficulties encountered this year, overall, 97-percent of all ODF Southwest fires were held at ten acres or less. We accredit this not only to our aggressive initial attack and well-trained team, but our countless partners throughout our region that have helped to make this season a success.

The termination of fire season removes fire prevention regulations on equipment use and the use of fire for debris burning. This applies to the public and industrial operations on forestlands. However, many structural fire agencies require permits for debris burning; please check with your local fire department to obtain any necessary permits before burning.

While fire season is over, fire prevention must continue. Please be vigilant while burning debris, making sure that a burn pile is never left unattended. Also, please use caution while using machinery that could produce a spark. Fall weather in Southern Oregon can vary greatly.

While fire season has officially come to a close, we are still here to help. Fire prevention tips and additional information is available online at [www.swofire.com](http://www.swofire.com), our Facebook page: [@ODFSouthwest](https://www.facebook.com/ODFSouthwest).

###