

Co-Chair Winters, Co-Chair Stark, distinguished members of the Sub Committee, I am Deputy Fire Chief Howard Owens. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of SB 5532 and specifically the mission of the 173rd Fire Department stationed at Kingsley Field Air National Guard Base in Klamath Falls. Before I begin I wanted to share with you that I am a lifelong Oregon resident born and raised in Klamath Falls. I am also a retired Air Force Master Sargent and I worked previously as a Battalion Chief for the City of Coos Bay. When an opportunity was available to return to my home town of Klamath Falls as a State of Oregon employee and be part of the 173rd Fighter Wing Fire Department I was thrilled!

The 173rd Fighter Wing, Fire and Emergency Services is comprised of 30 State employees and one federal employee – all firefighters, all fire protection specialists. Our primary mission is to provide Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting – or ARFF –at Kingsley Field in support of training student fighter pilots for air-to-air combat. This Air Force and Air National Guard ARFF mission requires a combination of on-duty firefighters and water requirement to be available during military aircraft flying operations. We also provide 24-hour Fire and Emergency Services for the facilities and personnel at the 173 Fighter Wing.

To give you a feel for the scope of our capability, during calendar year 2016 we accumulated 210 emergency responses, 52 of which were specific to our F-15 aircraft mission. But upholding our mission to ensure the safety of others also includes our Firefighters providing service to the Crater Lake-Klamath Falls Regional Airport as well as assisting civilian fire departments in Klamath Falls and the surrounding communities.

Through an Airport Joint Use Agreement (AJUA), our 173rd Fire and Emergency Services is responsible for providing emergency response to commercial air carrier service and tenant aviation services like FedEx and UPS. In fact, four of last year's emergency responses were for large scale civilian airlines experiencing medical and mechanical related emergencies. One of them, Alaskan Airlines Flight 737, involved a passenger having an emergent cardiac problem. The aircraft landed safely and the 173rd Fire Department was able to provide advanced life support (ALS) medical care until the patient could be transported to local Sky Lakes Medical Center for further treatment. Given the rural nature of the Klamath Falls and Klamath Basin area, strong ties have developed through the establishment of Mutual-Aid Agreements and public-private partnerships with City and County agencies. In 2016, the 173rd Fire Department provided 113 mutual aid responses to support emergencies in the community. Fire District # 1 is the primary provider for fire and medical emergency services in Klamath Falls and surrounding areas. Based on call volume and sometimes simultaneously occurring incidents, Kingsley Firefighters have been called to respond. Last year we responded to 7 residential structure fires. On 5 of those responses, Kingsley provided the initial engine company, started Incident Command responsibilities, and initiated fire attack. The remaining 106 responses in 2016 were for medical emergencies, vehicle accidents, and miscellaneous fires involving vegetation, vehicles, and refuse dumpsters.

The 173rd Fire Department is also a key partner in the county being able to support a Governor declared conflagration to large-scale wildfires in Oregon. Over the last two summers, Kingsley Fire sent engines and crews for urban interface structure protection during conflagrations at Crater Lake & La Pine.

Our department takes great pride in supporting our community. The 173rd Fighter Wing & Fire Department was key in a partnership with Klamath Community College (KCC) and the start of a Public Safety Training Center. Our shared goal now provides students with a passion or interest in fire, structure/wildland and emergency medical services, an opportunity to acquire training in their hometown.

The Fire department, with support of the wing, has participated or partnered on many heart touching projects locally and within Southern Oregon. For example, our department spearheads an annual Polar Plunge to raise money for Special Olympics. We are also proud to be the leader in the county for "Pink T-Shirt October" where we donate all fund-raising proceeds to Sky Lakes Oncology Center so they can assist women with breast cancer screenings and treatment items.

When the 173rd Fighter Wing holds the Air National Guard's largest combat fighter exercise every two years in Southern Oregon - *Sentry Eagle* --the community and over 7,000 visitors are thrilled to see a diversity of aircraft in hometown Klamath Falls. However, it's the Kingsley Fire Department who provides expertise for Incident Action Planning and supports the needs of the event including medical, mass casualty, hazardous material and fire response preparedness.

Even in the toughest of times, Kingsley Fire's State employees are ready to act. During the tragic events of the Umpqua Community College shooting, the 173rd Fire Department was a valuable resource for the emergency response coalition. Members of our team worked with local incident managers to provide meals and offer critical incident stress counseling to those in need.

As I conclude, I want to speak to one final partnership that rounds out the 173rd Fire Department success story -- the partnership between State and Federal entities. The National Guard Bureau supports the Nation's Air National Guard wing Fire Departments through longstanding Agreements. The Fire Program at Kingsley Field is primarily 100% reimbursed with Federal dollars provided through the National Guard Bureau. However, historically there are certain costs which require State investment, such as pay for select certifications, costs associated with the Oregon Department of Justice and others. The State of Oregon -- through the Oregon Military department -- have covered costs in past bienniums and that deserves great thanks. The support you provide to the Oregon Military Department, the Oregon Air National Guard, the 173^d Fighter Wing, and the surrounding community will always be greatly appreciated. Lastly, I offer my personal thanks to the members of this committee for the opportunity to address you today.