

STATE OF OREGON  
2020 LABOR DAY FIRES  
AFTER ACTION REVIEW'S



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# EXTRAORDINARY WILDFIRES OF SEPTEMBER 2020

Within 24 hours 12 counties were battling conflagrations.

Wildfire encroachment on rural and urban communities caused 1/6 of Oregon's population to be under evacuation notice.

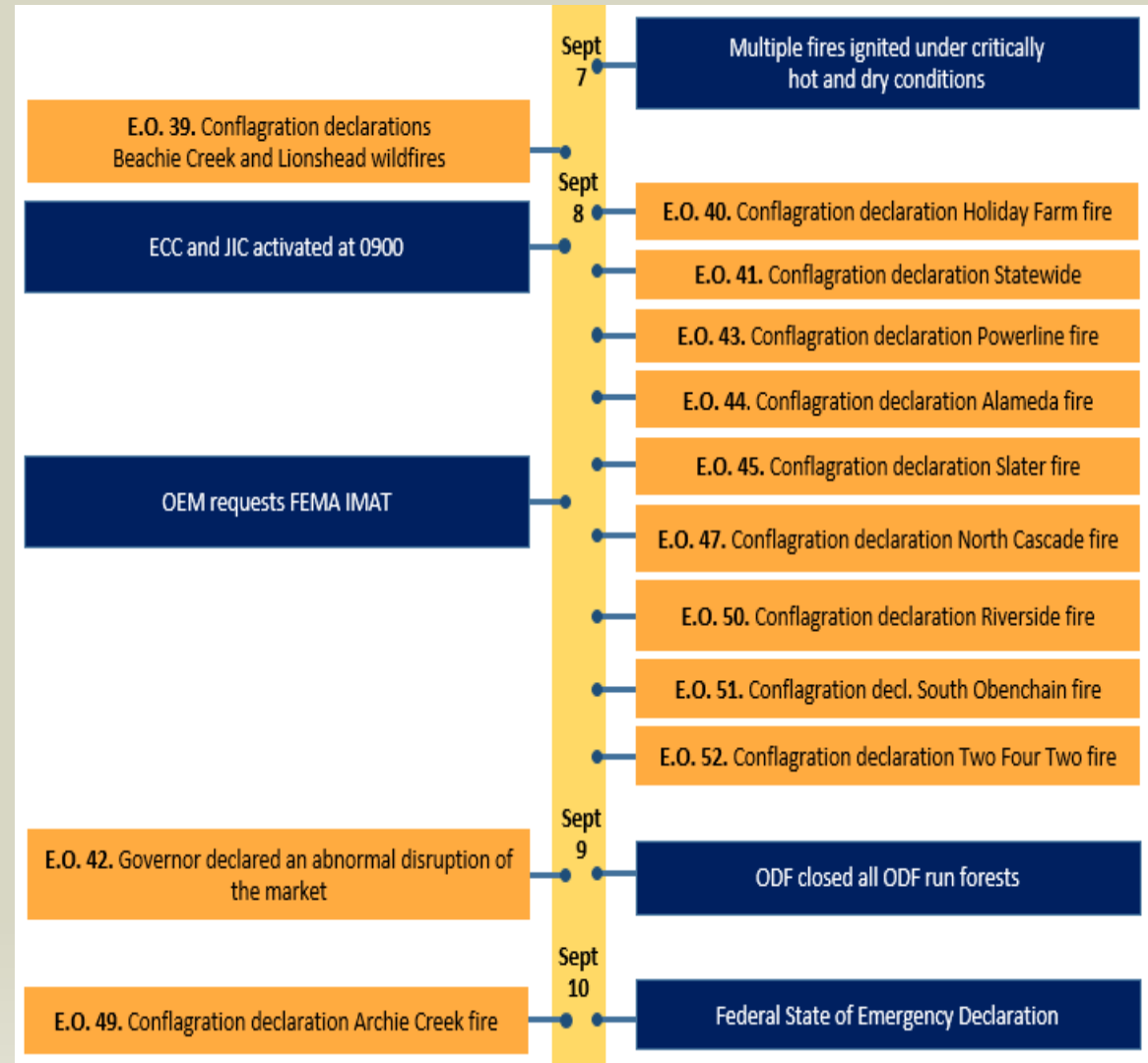
Evacuation and sheltering conducted under COVID-19 conditions.

Nine Oregonians lost their lives.

4,026 residences destroyed.

Over 1 million acres of public and private land burned.

Recovery will take many years.





# AAR PURPOSE AND SCOPE

## Purpose:

- Identify areas of success and opportunities for improvement to help Oregon better prepare for and respond to future wildfire events.

## AAR Scope:

- Review, evaluate, and make recommendations around the State of Oregon's response to the 2020 wildland fires and straight-line wind event.

## Timeframe under review:

- September 1, 2020 through September 30, 2020.



# TASKED FOCUS AREAS

Emergency Support Function 4 – Firefighting

State Response Operations and Coordination

Alert and Warning Systems

State Mobile Morgue Operations

EMAC Support

Emergency Authorities

Initial Recovery

Joint Information Center



# DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Facilitated meeting (ODF, OSFM, OEM, and SRO)

## Documents review

- Reviewed documentation related to the response and initial recovery operations, including situation reports, incident action plans, articles, executive orders, etc.

## Interviews and Surveys

- Stakeholders identified through OEM, OSFM, ODF, and the State Resilience Officer. \*\*Local and tribal firefighters not included in stakeholder group as this was an evaluation of systems and coordination effectiveness, not an evaluation of firefighting decisions and actions.



# STAKEHOLDERS PARTICIPATING IN INTERVIEWS

## State Stakeholders

- Business Oregon
- Department of Administrative Services
- Department of Energy
- Department of Environmental Quality
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Justice
- Governor's Office
- Office of the Chief Information Officer
- Office of Emergency Management
- Oregon Department of Aviation
- Oregon Department of Forestry
- Oregon Health Authority
- Oregon State Fire Marshal
- Public Utility Commission

## Local Stakeholders

- City of Albany, OR
- Lincoln City, OR
- Wasco County, OR

## Federal Stakeholders

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- FEMA Region 10
- US Department of Homeland Security, Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency

## Non-governmental Stakeholders

- American Red Cross
- Team Rubicon



# FINDINGS

- Successes and Areas for Improvement identified in Oregon's wildfire response efforts are organized into core capabilities:

Planning

Public Information and Warning

Operational Coordination

Fire Management and Suppression

Mass Search and Rescue Operations

Fatality Management Services

Infrastructure Systems

Mass Care Services

Operational Communications

Recovery



# EXAMPLE CAPABILITIES ANALYSIS

## Strengths

- Acknowledges what worked well and sometimes highlights actions to continue

## Areas for Improvement

- Highlights challenge experienced in the response and recommends corrective actions to address the problem

### STRENGTHS

#### → Firefighting Response Planned for and Practiced

**Analysis:** Wildfire is a known and recurring threat across Oregon, and the September 2020 collection of fires was extraordinary. Burdened by resource limitations from surrounding state partners, ODF and OSFM supported and augmented district firefighting resources using all available options. The Governor's Conflagration declarations authorized engagement of expanded resource options from across state agencies as well as national and international assets. Preparation for fire season – planning, training, exercising, coordination with partners, etc. – established the foundation for an overall successful response.

### AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

#### → Deliberate Planning and Training (Ctrl) ▾

**Analysis:** As this was the first time the State Recovery Plan was used, there was a significant learning curve for all involved. There is skeleton staffing for recovery; facilitation of the enterprise recovery operation is being managed by two people, which is not sufficient for a statewide implementation.

**Recommendation:** Capture the challenges and adjustments that have been (and will be) identified in the wildfire recovery effort and refine the plan to be more effective and efficient in future events. Share the lessons learned with communities across the state to help them establish a localized recovery framework.





# EXAMPLES OF IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Coordination vs. Operations.** The state should establish a workgroup to outline what a shift from the state's coordination posture to an operations posture requires.

**Staffing Shortfalls.** OEM staffing should be expanded to provide capacity for full operational support. Expansion of the liaison concept can provide better support to local and tribal communities.



# EXAMPLES OF IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

**Notification System Failures.** There is strong support for the state having a role in local and tribal notifications; home rule authorities are raised as concerns. Exploration of state supported systems, lower tech options, and no-tech options should also be explored.

**Outreach Equity.** Explore options for adding public information specialists with additional language skills or how to embed other language speakers into the JIC to be present as messaging is developed. Develop specific plans for communications with vulnerable communities.



# EXAMPLES OF IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

**Take Action on Wildfire Council Recommendations.** Proceed to implement the recommendations established by the Governor's Council of Wildfire Response.

**Ops Center Limitations.** Engage state, tribal, and local stakeholders to define requirements for an effective information management system, then compare the desired requirements against Ops Center's capabilities. Find a new system if Ops Center does not meet needs.



# EXAMPLES OF IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

## **Limited Training and Maintenance on Strategic Technology Reserve.**

A training and maintenance schedule should be developed to ensure these communications tools are immediately deployable to field personnel trained to put the equipment to use.

**Public Safety Power Shut-offs.** Educate ECC staff and decision-makers on the nature and role that public safety power shut-offs serve.



# EXAMPLES OF IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

**Critical Infrastructure Monitoring.** Consider developing a cadre of GIS experts to scale up staffing during large incidents to support visual communication. Identify and train GIS staff from other state agencies to support ECC operations.

**Damage Assessment.** The state should establish a common tool for damage assessment. There are technology tools and services that facilitate unified collection of damage assessment data at the level needed to prepare declaration requests.



# EXAMPLES OF IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

**State Recovery Plan Operationalized.** Encourage deploying staff through EMAC to assist other states in implementing recovery strategies. These experiences will broaden and deepen recovery knowledge, which will benefit Oregon's recovery from the next large event.

**Deliberate Recovery Planning and Training.** Capture the challenges and adjustments identified in the wildfire recovery effort and refine the plan to be more effective and efficient in future events. Share the lessons learned with communities across the state to help them establish a localized recovery framework.



# IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

OEM, OSFM, ODF, DAS, and Governor's Office representatives evaluated opportunities and recommendations identified in the report

- Added implementation comments
- Assigned responsible organizations
- Defined completion targets
  - Short term = 3-9 months
  - Mid term = 9-18 months
  - Long term = More than 18 months



# IMPROVEMENTS UNDERWAY

**OR Alert.** Statewide notification system from Everbridge procured by DAS to support more comprehensive alerts and warnings.

**Staffing shortfalls.** Additional positions have been funded for OEM.

**Strategic Technology Reserve.** Trailers are being deployed to counties to be managed and maintained. Radios will be programmed for amateur radio frequencies and SHARES frequencies.

**Recovery Planning and Training.** Regional recovery staffing structure is planned.





# MOVING FORWARD

## Oversite of corrective actions

- Co-Leads: Governor's Office and DAS

## Report availability

- Develop tools to provided quarterly updates

## Report access

- Looking to setup some type of dashboard



# POINT OF CONTACT

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