

My daughter had just started out life on her own a few years before. Her beautiful little apartment that she had neatly decorated in her style. Her two cats, her two "boys", were in fact like her children. The morning of September 9th 2020 we sat next to her apartment complex, a burning pile of rubble, 10 foot tall flames.

My daughter didn't receive any notification that there were evacuation notices for her apartment complex, few fire survivors would get any emergency notification that day. My daughter received no notifications about the fire. No warnings.

Inside her apartment, 2 cats. They were dear, cherished members of our family and she kept them as indoor cats to keep them safe. She kept them indoors to keep them SAFE.

A bottom floor window had been left open so we hoped that they had made their way out the window, hoped beyond hope. In fact I've never wished for something this hard in my life. So we made a 100 signs and hung them all over. We spent days walking Phoenix. Against the law, we walked in and we called and we called and we searched and we searched. We tried to help the animals we found. Left fresh water and food for the many stranded and suddenly homeless pets.

Our desperate calls to the boys remained unanswered.

As soon as the police left the area unattended we decided to start sifting the ash for any belongings. Dressed in hazmat gear we entered the area. As I stepped down into her apartment rubble and ash, a small bone fell across my foot. Several hours of delicate sifting of this fine white powdered drywall and ash revealed the skeleton of what looked like two cats. The bones didn't match up and I couldn't tell if I had the remains of both cats or just one.

I took the bones to veterinarians who couldn't help me. Dr Keener in Klamath falls recommended I take the remains to a forensic biologist in Ashland. I contacted them immediately. Barry Baker and his staff at the forensics lab in Ashland were able to confirm I only had one skeleton. I am forever grateful for his help.

When I came to the realization that I would be searching for another skeleton I insisted my child not be involved. I couldn't further risk her health and life in this horrific situation. Due to the extreme hazards in the area, the toxic chemicals literally floating in the air from all the ash and debris, I wore full hazmat gear. Trees all around, badly burned, ready to fall.

On October 12th, with a paint brush I sifted out the second cat, his fragile, almost cremated little body was laying nearly intact, his vertebrae still attached in a soft curved line.

This is the most tragic and preventable disaster I've ever experienced. I am still angry with Jackson county for many reasons and the negligence in Jackson county that contributed to this fire is still happening. A year later and nothing has been done to ensure this can't happen again.

Their tiny bodies, so badly burned that they were almost cremated, almost dust. So fragile that they wanted to crumble away at the lightest touch. Ash, that's all that was left of the life my daughter had built, ash.

Thank you for reading and caring.

Jamie Cameron

Below is the letter I sent to lawmakers, lawyers, safety personnel, local and national news papers. I wrote to dozens of people with my concerns. I'm not actually done. I have contacted several lawyers because Jackson county continues to ignore the Greenway.

The Almeda/Greenway fire was one of the worst tragedies to ever hit Southern Oregon. In just a few hours 2 entire towns were nearly burned off the map and thousands were left homeless. The cause of this fire and other fires in Jackson county on September 8th 2020 are still under investigation.

The fire is now reported to have been started around 11 am near a dog park in Ashland, Oregon. This man-made fire combined with unusually high winds quickly spread across unmaintained dry grassland. This 15-inch tall dry grassland can be found all around Jackson county. Jackson county has weed

abatement laws to prevent grassland fires but they are not diligently enforced. The fire, fed by ample amounts of readily available dry fuel, spread rapidly and almost immediately grew out of control. It threatened structures almost as soon as it started and appears to have jumped Interstate 5 at several locations early that day. The fire then appears to have immediately spread to Ashland Creek and The Greenway just North of Ashland Oregon.

The Greenway is a relatively unmaintained "nature path"/ bike path that runs from Ashland, Oregon to North of Central Point, Oregon. This "nature trail" runs through the heart of the Rogue Valley. It follows a naturally existing creek known as Bear Creek. In 1996 the Greenway was described as a fire hazard. In the following two decades this would prove to be a serious public safety concern over and over again. News broadcasts in 2007 talked about the fire dangers and public safety concerns on the Greenway. 2018, 2019, 2020 news articles about fire hazards and reports of illegal fires constantly. A 2019 news article stated, "hundreds of fires on the Greenway". In May of 2020, Jackson County police were, "Investigating 50 suspicious fires on the Greenway". Right now, the Greenway is a densely, overgrown, unmanaged bramble of dead and dying blackberry bushes, 20-inch-tall dry grass and other dead and dried plant life. Jackson County had been without rain for almost 2 months prior to the fire. Once the fire spread from Ashland to the overgrown Greenway it quickly grew to an unmanageable fireball. I fully believe the conditions on the Greenway directly contributed to the severity of this fire and mass human tragedy that would follow.

The fire then began to roar up the Greenway unchecked. Talent, the town next in the fire's path, wasn't even alerted to the fact that a fire was raging toward them. The residents received no official warnings, no official instructions and many had to rely on facebook posts by other residents to even understand the severity of the situation they were in. Many residents of Talent report that they had no clue what was happening and had no clue what they should do. Panic, confusion and chaos would ensue.

As the residents of Talent began to evacuate on their own volition, they found traffic on all roadways at a standstill. Many residents of Talent and Phoenix have reported to me that heavy, bumper to bumper traffic, was on all the roads in and out of Talent and Phoenix that day.

Reports of standstill traffic in and out of the evac zone on all road ways were observed from about the time the fire started in Ashland until well after 5 pm. Many residents reported large numbers of semi-trucks on the back-county roads. This heavy traffic hindered firefighting efforts all around Talent and Phoenix. This heavy traffic made all efforts to fight the fires and efficiently evacuate 2 communities in an orderly, timely manner, impossible.

The emergency responders met such heavy traffic that they couldn't get in to evacuate facilities of senior citizens. One retirement facility was rescued by a car dealership in Ashland, Oregon when emergency crews couldn't reach them. A retirement facility in Talent, 180 seniors, was evacuated by a 4-man facility maintenance crew.

Jackson County emergency response and other emergency response officials repeatedly chose to open Interstate 5 even though the fire was being fought on both sides of the Interstate. During brief periods when Interstate 5 traffic was stopped, I suspect individual GPS units then re-routed the I-5 traffic to highway 99, county roads and surface streets. Had Interstate traffic been re-routed at the California border this would have left all roadways clear for emergency response personnel and evacuees from these communities. I feel because Interstate traffic was poorly managed this heavy flow of vehicles flooded into the burning, evacuating communities.

Jackson County Emergency Management made the deliberate choice to not use the well tested Emergency Alert System. We are all aware of this alert system. It's been in use for decades and you

would recognize it as a long beep interrupting your TV and Radio followed by, "If this had been an actual emergency.." Countless residents, including many disabled seniors were not aware of evacuation orders. At least one senior woman that afternoon had no clue a fire had even started in Ashland, she got a call from her son-in-law at 3:30 pm telling her to get out.

Jackson County officials were expecting residents in the middle of panic and complete chaos to flip between facebook pages for critical updates and expected evacuees in the middle of this tragic event to sign up for a new alert system? Why was critical emergency information not disseminated across all available emergency alert platforms?

No fire hydrants were used in Phoenix, Oregon. It has been reported by Talent residents that no fire hydrants were tapped in Talent. It was initially publicly released on a local news station that due to low water pressure hydrants couldn't be used to fight the fires that day. I have since been told that the low pressure was due to the melting of widely used of PVC piping. Once that pipping melted, due to the fire, it then caused the property to flood thereby lowering the water pressure available to fight the fires. I cannot confirm actual cause of this situation.

Last but not least, I return to the Greenway. If you look at arial footage of the fire zone you can see the fire's path almost completely followed the entire length of the Greenway from Ashland to Phoenix. It appears the fire then jumped from the Greenway to Coleman Creek, also unmanaged and overgrown. Coleman Creek burned almost entirely to N. Rose in Phoenix taking all the Cheryl Lane apartment complexes and all the properties North of Dano Drive in Phoenix.

Jackson county has known for decades about the fire hazards humans pose on the Greenway. Enough concern to pay police to manage the problems. Bear Creek and the Greenway should be considered wildland-urban interface. Fire prevention measures to reduce fuel sources and thin and remove dead and dying plants has not been completed in any way. Although the Greenway has now directly contributed to loss of property for thousands of people no serious measures are in place now to reduce the fire hazards on the other several miles of the Greenway. The Greenway poses a serious risk to all adjoining properties throughout Jackson County.

Many families may never fully recover from their catastrophic losses.

On a personal note, my daughter lost everything in the fire that day including her two cats. We spent a month searching Phoenix and her destroyed neighborhood for her cats in the hopes they escaped the burning buildings. Sadly, the cats did not make it out alive, along with the 100's of other pets that died in that inferno. I spent weeks sifting the rubble and ash of my child's apartment to confirm the whereabouts of her pets. I sifted one set of remains out of the ash of her life mid september. After the forensic biologist in Ashland was able to confirm I only had one cat, I began sifting the apartment for the second cat. I found the remains of her other cat on October 12th. The last time I was at my daughter's apartment building was October 13th to sift and retrieve anything else I could. I begged my daughter to stay away from the sifting because I didn't want her exposed to the toxic debris of her apartment. So for weeks I dressed in full hazmat gear, gloves and a gas mask and carefully sifted through the powdered drywall, twisted mutilated metal and devastation.

Thank you for your time.

Jamie Cameron