

March 20, 2023  
Chair Grayber  
House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street  
Salem Oregon 97301

Chair Grayber and members of the House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness,

Thank you for the opportunity to present in support of HB 2484, relating to prioritizing preparedness equipment necessary for Urban Search and Rescue.

After 9/11, Oregon established 2 USAR teams. Gresham was in the north team. Since 2008, Gresham has gone it alone, like our other communities, in supporting this program. We have maintained our staffing and training through city funds and member dedication to keeping our team functioning as we believe it is critical to public safety.

Gresham has evolved from a farming community on the 1970's, to a suburban community of the 1980's, to where it is now as an urban community laying in direct proximity to the City of Portland.

With that change our population density has increased as we continue to not only grow out but up. We have more people living in taller buildings. While this is not online a bad thing, it creates the need for a suitable response to all types of structural collapse.

Our department serves the cities of Gresham, Troutdale, Fairview and Wood Village. We also serve Multnomah County Fire District 10 in the unincorporated areas of the county. This has a combined population of approximately 150,000 people.

This diverse area includes the Columbia River Gorge Scenic area. Being located there often creates devastating snow, ice and windstorms that can last weeks at a time. There are large tracts of protected land that are susceptible to wild land urban interface fires like this that occurred in Oregon in 2020.

I have served on the regional hazmat team for over 30 years. I have testified in front of this body in the past about its need for support. This body took the brave step to support the program. It is run by the Office of the Oregon State Fire Marshal and has been a tremendous success. I point to the crude oil train derailment in Mosier Oregon as a gleaming example of communities coming together to help our neighbors through OSFM coordination. Our Incident Management Teams and our Mobilization Plans are top notch thanks to OSFM. This is where they are critical to any program's viability. It works.

Our agency is prepared to provide 18 technical rescue technicians, 15 hazmat technicians and 12 swift water rescue technicians available for deployment wherever they are needed in our state or beyond.

Federal (FEMA) USAR teams will take days to respond. With OSFM coordinating, our response will likely be hours. This includes all areas of the state would receive whatever response the situation demands.

I have been a firefighter in Oregon for 42 years. I have seen many changes. We have gone from, in many cases, a competitive, non-cooperative response in the Oregon Fire Service to a highly cooperative, coordinated service that disregards the boundaries, be they geographical, physical, political, or personal. This type of response has worked in the past, is working now and will work in the future.

Thank you for your consideration,

Michael E. Traeger  
Battalion Chief – Gresham Fire