

Forwarding from the Oregon Department of Forestry

DON'T STRESS EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEM - THOSE DEBRIS BURNS CAN WAIT!

News Release from **Oregon Dept. of Forestry**
Posted on FlashAlert: March 20th, 2020 4:44 PM

SALEM, Ore. -- The first week of spring has emergency responders concerned. Beyond the impacts of the COVID-19 virus, several days of warm, dry weather has already dried out Oregon's landscape, increasing wildfire risk.

The month of March alone has already seen 18 fires escape control on the private, county, state and federal lands protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry. At this same time last year, the Santiam Park Fire east of Salem burned nearly 200 acres and threatened the community of Lyons. While rain is expected to return early next week, emergency responders are quick to caution against using fire in any form this weekend and beyond until favorable conditions return.

"As we all practice social distancing and spend more time at home, it is an excellent time to clean up around the property to abate any fire risk for this summer," said ODF Fire Prevention Coordinator Tom Fields. "But it's best to just hold off burning any yard debris until calmer conditions return."

Fields says if burning is your choice of debris disposal, property owners can still accomplish their burns under milder conditions by following a few simple steps.

- Place yard debris in an open area away from structures, trees and power lines.
- Create small piles (4' x 4') to better manage the burn.
- Cover portions of piles with polyethylene plastic (landscape material) to keep a portion dry for lighting later.
- When conditions improve, check with your local fire agency for any regulations in place.
- Never burn under windy conditions.
- To maintain containment, create a perimeter around the pile at a minimum of 3 feet, scraped clear to bare mineral soil.
- Keep a shovel and charged hose nearby to manage the burn.
- Make sure the pile is dead out before leaving.
- Return periodically over several weeks to make sure the pile is still out: No heat, no smoke.

While the official start of fire season may still be a couple of months away, now is not the time to add more strain to the system, further taxing the capacity of first responders.

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