Pacific Northwest Region

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Multiple wildfires in Pacific Northwest likely to burn until fall rains arrive

PORTLAND, Ore., August 8, 2024 —Fire Managers in the Pacific Northwest predict that many wildfires currently burning in Washington and Oregon, and potentially new ones, will persist until the region experiences significant rain or snow this fall.

Firefighters are actively battling these fires. With widespread lightning expected this month, fire managers will be adopting a strategic approach to integrate risk management, ecosystem resilience, and community involvement on long-duration fires before typical east wind events potentially arrive around the beginning of fall.

"Our planners are taking a realistic look at current wildfires, expected new fires, and the resources we have to help us safeguard human lives and property while enhancing our ability to respond to wildfires in high-risk areas," said Jacque Buchanan, Regional Forester for the Pacific Northwest Region of the Forest Service.

Among other tactics, firefighters working long-duration wildfires will focus on identifying and preparing a network of primary and contingency containment lines to help stop fires as they approach critical areas like communities, powerlines, water supply systems, and natural and cultural resources.

"Firefighting is inherently risky. Our role as fire managers is to develop strategies that maximize success while minimizing the risk of injury or death to emergency responders," said Kelly Kane, Acting Fire, Fuels and Aviation Director for the Pacific Northwest and Alaska Regions. "There is no structure that is worth the life of the sons, daughters, parents, siblings and friends that make up our wildland firefighting workforce."

Long-duration fires are typical in timber-dominated forests, such as those found in Oregon and Washington, particularly along and west of the Cascades. These areas provide ample fuel that can sustain fires for extended periods and hold heat deep within the interior of a wildfire until conditions either escalate or moderate fire activity.

The steep, remote locations also make it difficult for firefighters to access wildfires on National Forest lands and present



The Moss Mountain Fire was found after an intense lightning storm moved through the Middle Fork Ranger District of the Willamette National Forest on July 17th. The fire continues to burn in steep, thickly forested terrain. Additional information is available at Orwif Oakridge Lightning Fires 2024 Information | InciWeb (wildfire.gov). Source: Inciweb

significant hazards, including rolling rocks and logs that can cause injuries. Extracting injured firefighters from these areas is also challenging and increases the risk of complications. Despite these challenges, suppression efforts to protect communities and critical areas will continue.

"Communities will likely face prolonged smoke and other impacts from these fires," said Kane. "Large and long-duration fires vary in intensity and will continue to produce smoke as they move with wind and terrain until extinguished by significant rain or snow."

Helpful tips from our partners on what you can do to prepare:

- Create Defensible Space: Clear vegetation and debris around your home to create a buffer zone that can help slow the spread of fire.
- Prepare an Emergency Kit: Include essentials such as water, food, medications, important documents, and personal items.
- Stay Informed: Keep up with the latest fire information and evacuation orders from local authorities.



The Pioneer Fire was reported on June 8th on private land northwest of Chelan and quickly spread onto the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, including wilderness. The fire remains active in steep, rocky and hard to access terrain. Additional information is available at Wases Pioneer Information | InciWeb (wildfire.gov). Source: Inciweb

- Install Smoke Alarms: Ensure your home has working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Have an Evacuation Plan: Plan and practice multiple evacuation routes with your family.
- Protect Your Air Quality: Use air purifiers and keep windows closed to reduce smoke exposure indoors.

Information on preparing for and staying safe from wildfire smoke are available at <u>Smoke-Ready Toolbox for Wildfires | US EPA https://www.epa.gov/air-research/smoke-ready-toolbox-wildfires.</u>

Support firefighters engaged in this challenging fire season by respecting emergency closures and adhering to fire restrictions. Do your part to prevent human-caused wildfires. Learn more at: https://smokeybear.com/en/prevention-how-tos.

For more news & information about National Forests in the Pacific Northwest, visit our news page at https://www.fs.usda.gov/news/r6/news-events or our home page, at https://www.fs.usda.gov/r6. For more information about the USDA Forest Service visit https://www.fs.usda.gov.



The Miners Complex Fires are burning deep in the Glacier Peak Wilderness of the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest in hard to access, thickly forested terrain. Additional information is available at Wamsf Miners Complex Fires Information | InciWeb (wildfire.gov). Source: Inciweb

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