



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – For Staff

### Wildland-urban interface and statewide wildfire hazard map

Why is the wildfire hazard map being made?

- The wildfire hazard map was directed by Senate Bill 762 and will help residents understand the environmental hazard of wildfire in their area.
- All 1.8 million property tax lots in Oregon have been assigned one of three hazard zones – low, moderate, and high.
- When a person knows what hazard zone they are in, they can prepare their home and property accordingly.

Who created the wildfire hazard map?

- Oregon State University, Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon State Fire Marshal, Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services, fire modeling experts, local subject matter experts, advisory committees, and stakeholders developed the wildfire hazard and WUI maps.
- The legislature directed them to develop the maps.
- ODF and OSU led the wildfire hazard map work.
- The legislature directed the map development:
  - First in 2021, through Senate Bill 762, a \$220 million bipartisan plan to improve the state's wildfire preparedness.
  - Then, in 2022, through SB 80 to clarify the map's purpose and reduce the hazard classes from five to three – low, moderate and high.

What's the difference between risk and hazard?

- For purposes of the map, wildfire "risk" would include characteristics of homes and properties like building materials, defensible space, proximity to fire departments, etc. Wildfire "hazard" does not include those characteristics in hazard assessments.
- Wildfire "hazard" is comprised of burn probability and fire intensity. It's a representation of environmental hazard to homes and structures based on weather, climate, topography, and vegetation. Homeowner actions like defensible space are not included in hazard assessment.

Okay, the map shows hazards, how does this help residents?

- The map will inform where home survivability measures like defensible space and home hardening should occur. Doing those things protects homes and lives if there is a wildfire, but it won't change the hazard class of a specific property.
- The map helps people know what they can do to reduce risks and protect property.
- Properties designated as high hazard and also in the wildland-urban interface may be subject to future defensible space and home hardening codes.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – For Staff

### Wildland-urban interface and statewide wildfire hazard map

- The purpose of the map is to prioritize where home survivability measures like defensible space and home hardening codes will apply. It is also to be used to assist in prioritizing fire adaptation and mitigation resources for the most vulnerable locations.
- ODF and other agencies may have grants to help landowners reduce wildfire risks. Knowing the hazard classification can help identify lands for grants to develop a healthier, resilient landscape.

What criteria is the map based on?

- The wildfire hazard map identifies where wildfires pose the most hazard to structures and other human developments based on four criteria: climate, weather, topography, and vegetation.

Were fire risk reduction measures done by landowners considered?

- Defensible space and fire hardening building actions are important in reducing the potential for damage to structures when a wildfire occurs.
- Neither defensible space nor fire hardening characteristics are part of the wildfire hazard calculations. The map identifying a property as high hazard and wildland-urban interface may mean future defensible space and home hardening codes may apply to their property.

When will the map be made public? Can we share it?

- On July 18, 2024, drafts of new statewide wildfire hazard and wildland-urban interface (WUI) maps developed by Oregon State University scientists will be released. The maps can be viewed online on the [Oregon Explorer](#) and the Oregon Department of Forestry will accept public comment on the draft maps through August 18.
- Until this point, ODF and OSU have been refining the map based on input from local leaders, scientists, landowners, and the public.
- For the map to be official, the Oregon Board of Forestry must follow a rulemaking process to ensure the public has time to comment on this draft.
- As background, since 2021 OSU and ODF have been developing the map. The development started with a science-based approach for a starting point. Next, ODF and OSU held public meetings to share the map, listen to the public, incorporate feedback and refine the map.

Can we share it on our district social media sites?

- Yes, the main ODF Facebook page will have a message with an invitation and link for public comment. Districts and staff can share that post.

Have ODF field staff and the public been able to help develop the map?

- Yes, ODF field staff and Salem staff have been involved in developing the map.
- The map incorporates changes identified by staff, partners, the public and public officials from feedback on the prior version of the map and through public outreach, such as:



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – For Staff

### Wildland-urban interface and statewide wildfire hazard map

- adjustments for hay and pasturelands.
- adjustments for northwest Oregon forest fuels.
- changes based on draft rules to include irrigation of agricultural crops as a mitigating factor in wildfire hazard assessments. Final maps will reflect rules as adopted by the Board of Forestry.
- ODF and OSU have and continue addressing feedback from staff, partners, and the public to ensure the maps are accurate and science based as intended.
- ODF and OSU will update the map from time to time and continue receiving input and recommendations, incorporating them as appropriate and allowed.
- For standardizing the map, OSU's science team needed to decide what to include and not include. Creating a standardized map can limit the variables, such as fuel loading, flame lengths, etc. The hazard classes are for landscape-scale areas.
- The hazard classes must be based on weather, climate, topography and vegetation.

#### When will the map go into effect?

- The map is planned to be final October 1, 2024. Notifications to property owners will be mailed at that time informing residents of their hazard class, WUI designation and appeal rights.

#### What, if anything, do I need to do now?

- Right now, become familiar with the General FAQs and answers.

#### Will the map change what I do day-to-day or how I do my job, what should I know?

- Yes, the map can be a great tool as you help the public learn more about wildfire, its risks, and how to reduce those risks.
- You can use the map to help the public:
  - Know the hazard class of their property.
  - Seek ODF available funds to reduce risks on their property.
  - Coordinate with ODF colleagues and partners to help communities reduce wildfire risks. This might be through community-wide or individually owned property enhancements.
- Using the map, you can help inform where home survivability measures like defensible space and home hardening should occur. Doing those things protect homes and lives in the event of a wildfire, but it won't change the hazard class of a specific property.
- **Definitely know** that only properties that are categorized **both** as high hazard and located in the wildland-urban interface will be subject to new defensible space and fire hardening codes. The [Oregon State Fire Marshal](#) is in charge of [defensible space](#) regulations and the [Department of Consumer and Business Services Building Codes Division](#) oversees fire hardening codes.
- While properties in low and moderate hazard categories will not be required to take specific actions under the new defensible space and home hardening regulations, the wildfire



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – For Staff

### Wildland-urban interface and statewide wildfire hazard map

hazard map and agency wildfire programs provide important resources for people who want to understand the hazard in their landscapes and mitigate their wildfire risk.

Will the map cause insurance rates to go up?

- By law, the maps will not be used by insurers to adjust rates, or by the state to make landowners modify the components of the building they live or work in unless significant updates are planned for structures within high hazard areas in the WUI.
- The insurance industry is responding to record catastrophic property losses in Oregon and throughout the west. There have been more wildfire property losses since 2020 than the previous 40 years combined.

How has headquarters or public affairs helped with communications?

- Public affairs has had one and a half people dedicated to this effort. While not all the effort has been public facing, the team has and continues to:
  - Facilitate public in-person and virtual meetings across the state for districts.
  - Draft and refine summaries, news releases, and legislative reports.
  - Develop infographics, pamphlets, maps, and presentations.
  - Coordinate messages representing ODF's interests among partner agencies, the governor's office, and the legislature.

What is the plan for communications when the final hazard map is published?

- Public Affairs plans to continue providing strategic communications advice, support, and products for staff and districts to successfully roll out the map, when finalized.
- The Protection Division with support from Public Affairs continues following the proper processes for rulemaking to provide transparency and access for anyone to comment and be part of the rulemaking process.
- After the map becomes rule, ODF and partner agencies will communicate the changes through the media, social media, public meetings, agency and cooperator meetings, and other venues and formats to help the public understand the map impacts.

Why doesn't the model include: fire response, manmade barriers, or homeowner efforts to reduce risk?

- The map is based on natural environmental factors, rather than human work to reduce risk.
- While ODF's fire response and effectiveness are excellent, those aren't natural environmental factors, so they weren't included in the criteria.

What other agencies are involved and helping communicate?

- The partners who developed the maps are helping communicate about the map.