

1998 FIRE CHRONOLOGY

JANUARY

MONTH:

Lightning – 0

Human Caused – 0

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 0

Total Acres – 0

No fires were reported in January.

It was a very wet January in the Pacific Northwest. Measurable rain was recorded at many western Oregon locations on 22 to 29 days during the month. In northwestern Oregon 35.85 inches of rain was received at Laurel Mountain, shattering the old record of 31.57 inches established in 1995. High winds and minor window damage was reported as a result of a tornado early in the afternoon of the 5th at Seaside. Brookings, Cave Junction and Crater Lake had the highest reported totals in southwestern Oregon (between 24.55” and 18.53”). East of the Cascades, the greatest value reported was from the Ochoco Ranger Station at 6.75”. If the Ochoco value is verified as being correct that will break the monthly record of 5.71” which was set in 1970. Temperatures averaged three to five degrees above normal statewide.

FEBRUARY

MONTH:

Lightning – 0

Human Caused – 0

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires - 0

Total Acres – 0

No fires were reported in February.

Above average temperatures continued through February, temperatures averaged one to four degrees above average. Warm temperatures expanded east of the Cascades on the 7th that tied a record in Pendleton at 62 degrees, set in 1945. The most significant storms occurred from about mid-month on. The central coast and southwest Oregon experienced wet and windy weather on the 12th with winds up to 63 mph recorded on the coast with gusts ranging from 60-80 mph in those areas. A strong cold front moved onshore on the evening of the 20th with wind gusts to 98 mph at Cape Blanco. Heavy snow followed the front into the Cascades, Siskiyou and east of the Cascades on the 21st. Strong winds combined with snow produced low visibilities due to blowing and drifting snow in south central Oregon.

MARCH

MONTH:

Lightning – 0

Human Caused – 0

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires - 0

Total Acres – 0

No fires were reported in March.

Despite a high potential for an active fire season, the 1998 season proved to be another tame one. Long-term dryness laid the foundation for high fire danger but, daily weather was pretty benign and very few critical weather events occurred, hence fire activity was low. Springtime rainfall was above normal for March through May time period, which contributed to an inactive spring burning season and a slow start to summer fire season. The Deschutes basin area received well-spaced rainfall throughout most of the summer.

APRIL

MONTH:
Lightning – 5
Human Caused – 13

YEAR-TO-DATE:
Total Fires - 18
Total Acres – 43.13

The first half of April was wet; the second half was dry with the exception of heavy rain and severe thunderstorms between the 22nd and 24th.

Klamath-Lake District fought two fires this month totaling 34 acres. Central Oregon District had a total of seven fires and 8.28 acres burned.

MAY

MONTH:
Lightning – 7
Human Caused – 23

YEAR-TO-DATE:
Total Fires – 30
Total Acres – 58.41

May was a month in which numerous monthly rainfall records were set throughout the state. Heavy rain $\frac{3}{4}$ inch diameter hail resulted in flooding in Klamath Falls and Lakeview from a series of storms the first week of May. Four to six inches of wet snow fell in the Ochoco Mountains east of Prineville the last two days of May. Heavy rains that triggered massive runoff followed the snow. The Ochoco Reservoir, already full in preparation for irrigation season, couldn't handle the unexpected precipitation. Water went over the dam spillway and the banks of the Ochoco Creek. Prineville Unit Forester John Jackson served as one of three incident commanders along with law enforcement and public safety representatives in evacuating nearly 400 homes with the help of ODF engine crews.

DFPA responded to a debris burning fire on May 1st burning 12 acres.

JUNE

MONTH:
Lightning – 22
Human Caused – 40

YEAR-TO-DATE:
Total Fires – 62
Total Acres – 87.24

Rainfall remained abundant through June before finally turning off abruptly in early July. Most areas of the state are in the low to moderate Fire Danger conditions.

Charlie Stone was promoted to Assistant State Forester for the Forest Protection Division in Salem. He was promoted from his previous position as Director of the Forest Practices Program.

Stone assumed his new duties June 1st to lead and set policy direction for administration of the Fire Protection Program and the Oregon Forest Practices Program.

Roy Woo has been named Director of ODF's Northwest Oregon Area. Woo was District Forester for ODF's Klamath-Lake District since 1989. Woo is a 26 year veteran with ODF. Woo stated, 'The challenge will be to meet the diverse needs of the public while also accomplishing the objectives of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds.' The Northwest Oregon Area comprises five districts responsible for administering agency programs on more than three million acres of state, private and federal forestland.

JULY

MONTH:

Lightning – 226

Human Caused – 153

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 379

Total Acres – 434.69

As of July 13th, all Districts and Associations are in fire season.

Most areas of the state are in moderate to high Fire Danger conditions.

Rick Rogers has been named District Forester for ODF's Western Lane District. Rogers stated, 'The biggest challenge today is the restoration of the various coho salmon runs and how that's going to play out.' He also listed both the landslide and fire protection issues as priorities.

A series of dry lightning storms moved through the state the week of July 26th. More than 100 fires from the 7,300 lightning strikes were spawned on land owned or protected by ODF.

AUGUST

MONTH:

Lightning – 277

Human Caused – 356

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 633

Total Acres – 1,355.74

August was a dry month statewide. Only some brief bouts of thunderstorms east of the Cascades broke the dry pattern.

Most areas of the state are in high to extreme Fire Danger conditions. District initial attack capabilities are at full strength for this time of year.

On August 19th, agents from the multi-agency arson task force arrested a seasonal U.S. Forest Service employee on suspicion of setting over 30 wildland fires in Southern Oregon.

Forest Grove District fought the Fir Crest Fry fire containing it to 25 acres on the 6th. A hay bailer started the fire.

Fire fighters in Central Oregon quickly extinguished numerous small fires occurring in the area on the 6th of August. This was accomplished in spite of extreme heat, long shifts and high winds. Prineville and Winema Hot Shot crews were dispatched to a 4,000-acre fire in Central

Washington. In Central Oregon, The Dalles contained the Fifteen Mile fire at 225 acres, caused by equipment use; also the Rowena fire, burning 2,208 acres on the 9th, caused by railroad.

NE District: Pendleton Unit responded to the Blalock Mountain fire, burning 535 acres on the 5th, caused by equipment use; also the East Birch Creek fire on the 12th, burning 655 acres which was also caused by equipment use.

SEPTEMBER

MONTH:

Lightning – 297

Human Caused – 498

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 795

Total Acres – 1,502.67

Temperatures averaged up to five degrees above normal during September. This was reported by Federal sources to be the fourth warmest September on record. Hot spells the end of August continued into September. Prineville established an all-time high for any day of the year with its 107-degree temperature on the 1st. The previous high was 105 in 1972. Numerous other locations set high temperature records for any day in the month of September. The ‘fall’ rains began about as abruptly as the spring rains ended. September 17th ushered in a two-week period of heavy rainfall that pretty much ended the fire threat across the Northwest area. There was another dry spell in mid October along with some east winds.

Salem Coordination Center has lined up a number of Oregon contract crews for eight fires in Oregon, Montana, Idaho and Washington.

While on patrol, two ODF employees discovered a pipe bomb that was placed on a bridge on State Lands near Silver Creek Falls State Park. State Police bomb squad was immediately called. They were able to drag the device off the bridge before attaching a small charge and blowing up the device. The pieces were then taken to the State Crime Lab. The device did not contain explosives, but someone went to a lot of work to create a ‘hoax’ bomb. This information is being shared to raise your awareness of the type of activities that occur.

Santiam Unit of Linn District fought to contain the Thomas Creek fire ignited on the 13th burning 70.10 acres. Cause was determined to be recreationist.

OCTOBER

MONTH:

Lightning – 300

Human Caused – 612

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 912

Total Acres – 2,570.82

The new water year began with below average precipitation throughout most of the state. Areas east of the Cascades generally had about one-half inch of rain. Two to four inches of rain were observed in southwest Oregon and four to six inches were recorded in interior northwest Oregon. Coastal areas received six to eight inches of rain.

One of Oregon’s mildest wildfire seasons on record officially ended October 27th. Clark Seely, Fire Protection Director, said the department’s ability to suppress fires along with a cooperative

Mother Nature resulted in a near record low number of acres burned in a year. ODF's suppression efforts were so successful this year that 97 percent of all fires that started on ODF protected lands were controlled at ten acres or less. ODF's goal is 94 percent.

Oregon Department of Forestry shared Recycler of the Year Award honors with its partners for the Toledo Debris Disposal Program that turns backyard waste into steam and electricity. The statewide Recycler of the Year Award was presented to ODF, Georgia-Pacific Corporation, The Timber Company, the Toledo Fire Department and the Lincoln County Solid Waste District by the Oregon Department of Administrative Services at a ceremony in Salem.

Fire fighters stayed busy on the 20th fighting the Toledo Complex fires. There were a total of nine fires, the largest burning 91 acres. They were all slash units on private lands that escaped their lines.

NOVEMBER

MONTH:

Lightning - 300

Human Caused – 613

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 913

Total Acres – 2,570.83

Strong jet stream winds blowing from west to east across the Pacific brought a series of storms into the Northwest beginning on the 19th. By the end of the month, most of Oregon had received considerably more than normal precipitation for the month. With 'La Nina' conditions persisting in the Pacific, expectations of the wet weather will continue into December.

DECEMBER

MONTH:

Lightning – 300

Human Caused – 613

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires - 913

Total Acres – 2,570.83

No fires were reported in December.

December was wet, especially in Western Oregon. A strong, wet and windy storm slammed into the state on the 4th and began the onslaught that lasted most of the month. Flooding and flood damage was reported in most basins during the month. Another moisture plume from the tropics hit the state beginning on the 6th, with Portland receiving a record of 0.86 inches, Grants Pass recorded 4.00 inches on the 7th, Brookings had 6.00 inches on the 8th. The rise of snowpack accumulations continued in December. The Tillamook State Forest approached eight inches of rain for a 38-hour period in late December, therefore, road closures occurred due to high water and slides.

Excellence in Safety awards for FY 1998 goes to:

Third Place: EL District, South Fork Camp, each with two preventable incidents.

Second Place: WO Dist., WL Dist., Linn Dist., and Coos Dist., each with one preventable incident.

Overall Winners: Astoria Dist., CO Dist., each with ZERO preventable incidents for the year.

