

5.2.6 Wildfire Prevention

In the sort of extreme fire weather conditions that have been a consistent part of historical local fires, firefighters can quickly become overwhelmed by the speed and intensity of new ignitions. Even when conditions are extreme, catastrophic fire can be avoided if it can be prevented from starting in the first place, making fire prevention incredibly important in reducing wildfire risk to Multnomah County.

The objectives of actions in this section are to raise awareness of wildfire ignition risks and reduce activities that can lead to ignition during extreme fire weather. Some actions overlap between fire prevention and public communication goals.

Fire Prevention Policies

The restriction of high-risk activities during dangerous wildfire conditions is a primary strategy for preventing fires.

Countywide outdoor burn ban periods are determined annually by the Multnomah County Fire Defense Board, and yard debris burning is determined on a district by district basis,⁷⁰ when approved by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

Other high-risk activities, such as camping and fireworks use, have also seen increasing restrictions as the risk of wildfire has increased year over year, although policies are not standardized by jurisdiction across the county. Determining what threshold of conditions should lead to park closures is a coordination need.

Fire Risk Signage

Signs indicating fire risk are an effective tool for raising risk awareness and reminding residents of fire prevention policies. Siting and funding additional signs could be a low-cost method of reducing ignition risk.



Figure 46 - A USFS peacock fire danger sign in the Siuslaw National Forest in Oregon.

Power Utility Prevention Programs

Oregon power providers have begun managing a Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) program as a preventative measure in risk areas with heavy wildfire fuels. Within Multnomah County, the first PSPS program was developed for the 2022 wildfire season by Portland General Electric (PGE),⁷¹ which provides residential and business power to the vast majority of rural, forested areas. PGE meteorologists monitor fire weather conditions and initiate a de-energization of power lines when risk thresholds, primarily determined by high winds and low humidity, are exceeded. This power shutoff prevents lines

⁷⁰ Yard debris burning is never allowed in the City of Portland.

⁷¹ Pacific Power also has a PSPS program, but no locations in their Multnomah County service area have been identified under the program as of Spring 2023.

impacted by falling trees from being an ignition source, especially in areas with high winds and challenging terrain.

[Interactive Version of This Map](#)

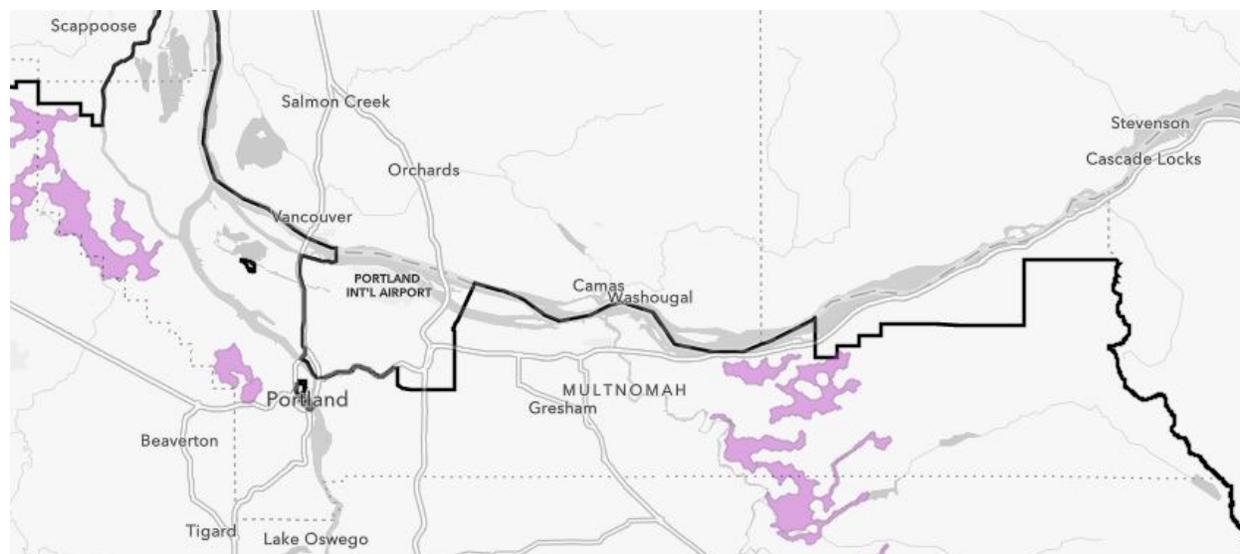


Figure 47 - Map of current PGE PSPS areas in their Multnomah County service area. Note that areas are continuously reviewed and current mapping should always be validated at the PGE website.

The PSPS program was implemented in a high-risk weather event in September 2022, with planning having already occurred to reduce health risks to those within power shutoff areas that would be most likely to be harmed by a multi-day power shutoff.

This planning process has also strived to build coordination between power utilities and local fire districts and governments to improve weather forecasting and fire detection and identify mutually beneficial fuel mitigation projects in areas outside the boundaries of utility right-of-ways that could still be impacted by downed power lines.

Equity Considerations

- Communication of wildfire risk during extreme risk periods needs to be accessible and multi-dimensional, including to unsheltered residents and recreational land users.
- Long-term preventative power shutoffs can create risks for residents that require powered medical equipment and refrigerated medicines.

Mitigation Strategies	Lead Agency/Jurisdiction
Support fuel mitigation work under power lines and coordinate with Multnomah County Transportation to improve vegetation management along county road right-of-ways.	Corbett Fire
Develop chipping program to reduce flammable debris, including completing grants to procure chipping equipment.	Corbett Fire
Determine interest in the City of Troutdale for adopting a backyard burn policy similar to existing policies in the Cities of Fairview, Gresham, and Wood Village.	Gresham Fire
Seek opportunities for wood chipper program grants that may include contract services for fuel reduction or removal. Use as an essential part of the education and awareness of the risk of wildfires occurring in wildfire hazard zones.	Portland Fire & Rescue Public Education
Develop full analysis of where fire prevention codes and environmental regulations are complimentary or contradictory.	Portland Fire & Rescue Public Education
Develop fire management plans for recreational/open areas - when to limit access or close parks due to fire risk or active fires.	Portland Fire & Rescue
Identify opportunities for community debris disposal collection sites that recycle or compost vegetative material	Portland Fire & Rescue Public Education
Work with Park Rangers, State Park Managers and Oregon Department of Transportation to patrol wildfire hazard zones areas to reduce unsanctioned camping.	Portland Fire & Rescue Public Education
Increase public awareness of wildfire hazards by posting information on existing placards in recreational areas, such as Smoky Bear fire danger dials, fire danger infographic signs, etc.	Portland Fire & Rescue Public Education
Establish an agreed upon fire danger rating system and develop agency protocols. Consider adopting the "National Fire Danger Rating System" (NFDRS) and install signs at key points in the City. Partner with the Oregon Department of Forestry to align with "Industrial Fire Protection Levels" (IFPL) throughout wildfire season, and related fire danger levels for public use. Install Smoky Bear Fire Danger signage (Peacock signs) around forested areas in City to raise awareness.	Portland Fire & Rescue Public Education
Review and potentially refine City contract specifications for machinery operations during wildfire season and during 'Red Flag' weather conditions.	Portland Fire & Rescue Public Education
Develop preparation plans for managing post-storm debris before wildfire season begins.	Portland Fire & Rescue Public Education
Work with landowners in highly visible wildfire risk areas to provide temporary and permanent signage.	Portland Fire & Rescue Public Education
Conduct fire inspections in sanctioned houseless communities to identify fire prevention opportunities	Portland Fire & Rescue Public Education
Engage unhoused community members residing within wildfire hazard zones about fire use dangers, and provide accessible materials with specific guidance.	Portland Fire & Rescue Public Education
Clarify timing of prohibited activities in mapped high-risk wildfire areas managed by Bureau of Environmental Services and determine how to	Portland Bureau of Environmental Services

Mitigation Strategies	Lead Agency/Jurisdiction
effectively message risk to the public. Align signage strategy with that used by Parks Bureau at trailheads.	
Determine in-house enforcement mechanism for prohibited activities creating wildfire risk in Bureau of Environmental Services managed natural areas.	Portland Bureau of Environmental Services
Increase Park Ranger staff and clarify rules for enforcement of open fire bans and other park policies.	Portland Parks & Recreation
Evaluate the feasibility of undergrounding power lines in the Bull Run Watershed Closure Area	Portland Water Bureau
Create fire risk signage for Water Bureau managed natural areas, and develop a sign maintenance staffing plan.	Portland Water Bureau
Install and maintain a wildfire risk (peacock) sign at Logie Trail Road near Rainbow Lake.	Scappoose Fire
Assess the feasibility of grants for providing fire prevention and suppression equipment - such as flameless stoves and fire buckets - to unsheltered communities in unincorporated vegetated areas.	Multnomah County Emergency Management