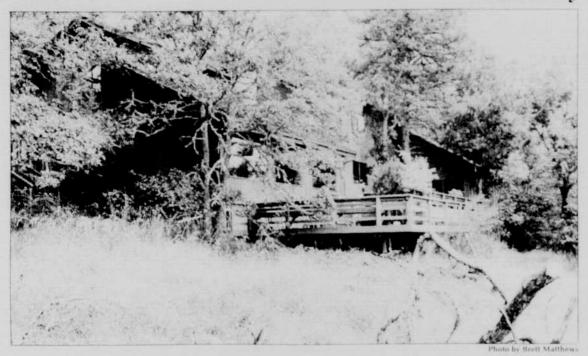
### Community



A recent state forestry department study showed that many homes in rural Lane County are at

# Rural homes at risk from wildfire

# Prevention steps outlined

By Wendy Fisher

The Willamette Valley is a high-risk area for home-destroying wildfires similar to those that burned 500 homes in California earlier this summer, according to a recent study by the Oregon Forestry Depart-

The study showed more than 4,300 homes and buildings in east Lane County and about 9,800 in the west part of the county located in what forestry personnel call "rural/forest interfacing areas" wooded and brush-filled areas.

The forestry department wants to use the study of highrisk areas as a tool to encourage home and building owners to make the surrounding land less vulnerable to fire, said Doug Decker, the forestry department's public affairs director.

We're asking folks to take this seriously." Decker said. 'It's sobering to see the shots of the Santa Barbara homes People need to take this into

One problem that forestry departments face is the increasing number of homes being built in high-risk areas. According to the forestry department and the U.S. Forest Service, this often forces firefighters to relinquish control of a main wildland fire or forest fire in order to fight a structure fire.

Neither the state forestry department nor the Forest Service trains its firefighters to fight structure fires, and they do not have the resources to do so. Their only responsibilities are forest or wildland fires, Decker

If a rural property owner's home or building were to catch fire, his or her only hope to save it is the local fire station.

A fire station's first responsibility is to save a burning structure, said Bruce Lamb, chief of the Cottage Grove Fire Department. In many rural areas. however, there are no fire sta-

If state forestry department firefighters were confronted

with a burning structure and no fire station were nearby, they would divert their attention to the structure fire. Decker said.

However, Forest Service firefighters are authorized to water down a burning house or building only if it threatens to spread to a national forest. They are not allowed to enter the structure.

We have no authority to fight structure fires. It's kind of a touchy situation," said Hubert Mapes, Forest Service assistant fire staff officer

Mapes added that the problem of homes in forested or brushy areas is less common in the Willamette National Forest than it is east of the Cascade Range

In many cases, the Forest Service, the state forestry department and local fire departments work together to fight fires. Each has the authority to request help from the other or-

The Forest Service has published a booklet titled "Protecting your Home from Wildfire for owners of homes and build-

Turn to WILDFIRES, Page 6

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