

Oregon DEQ loosens ash, debris cleanup rules

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As residents begin cleanup of their properties after the Holiday Farm Fire, one roadblock some hit was being unable to find a place to dump the ash and debris, which is considered potentially hazardous.

Typically, if someone tries to take the debris or ash from a burnt property to a dump, they will be turned away. State regulations around handling of asbestos and storing waste debris limit how and where hazardous waste can be handled.

The help speed up wildfire cleanup, the state's Environmental Quality Commission on Friday relaxed some requirements for handling of ash and debris that may contain asbestos and authorized temporary debris storage before its permanent disposal in landfills.

DEQ loosened its rule regarding asbestos for people who decide to hire a licensed asbestos abatement contractor to clean their properties, including:

- Fees and notification requirements are suspended; commercial and larger residential projects requiring demolition must still submit a notification;
- Open accumulation of asbestos debris is allowed;
- No requirement for negative-pressure enclosure of the debris;
- Use of mechanical equipment is allowed.

The changes also allow residential property owners with four or fewer dwelling units to do the work themselves if they meet certain conditions including not using paid labor and wetting down material to prevent airborne particles. The packaging, transport and disposal rules remain the same.

Additionally, to deal with the large volume of wildfire debris, the state will suspend rules to allow waste staging areas to be set up quickly to store and manage the debris for proper disposal. DEQ will issue letters of authorization for short-term stockpiling of wildfire debris and waive permit fees.

Wait before starting cleanup

Officials understand that people with properties that burned may want to be proactive and quickly begin cleanup. To avoid the risks from sifting through, moving and transporting fire debris, Oregon DEQ strongly urges people to wait and not to undertake cleanup themselves because of the risks posed by asbestos and other hazardous materials.

Rather, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the state of Oregon advise residents of burned properties to take advantage of a program to have Environmental Protection Agency crews remove household hazardous waste from fire-affected properties at no cost to the property owner.

The assistance, announced by FEMA on Monday, requires property owners to sign an access agreement, called a Right of Entry form, by Oct. 16 to allow crews



Upper McKenzie Fire Chief Christiana Rainbow Plews was among the several hundred residents who lost their home in the Holiday Farm Fire. She was at her home on Oct. 6, 2020, in Vida, Oregon to search through the debris to see if she could find mementoes, jewelry and her grandfather's medals from serving in the Pacific in World War II. ANDY NELSON, THE REGISTER-GUARD



The remains of a business Sept. 15, 2020, in Blue River, Oregon that was destroyed in the Holiday Farm Fire. Multiple agencies are working to assist in cleanup of debris in the aftermath of the blaze. ANDY NELSON, THE REGISTER-GUARD

to clean up hazardous waste on their property.

This is the first step in cleanup and is being offered at no cost to property owners (although insurance may be billed if applicable). This work will be funded by FEMA and the state of Oregon.

The second step is the removal of ash, debris and burned-out structures. State, county and federal partners are actively working to develop options for ash and debris removal. (This is likely, but not yet confirmed, to be available at no cost to property owners.)

Crews that specialize in identifying and removing hazardous substances will visit affected properties, determine

what hazardous materials need to be removed and remove them for safe disposal. Commercial or industrial properties are included in these efforts

Household hazardous waste removal timeline (approximate):

- Property owners are asked to sign the property access agreement by Oct. 16;
- Boots-on-the-ground teams: Oct. 20-22;
- Cleanup complete by Dec. 31.

For more information, call 458-239-2826 or email roefirms@lanecounty-eoc.net.

To sign a Right of Entry form, go to lanecounty.org/mckenziefire. There also is a helpline, with assistance avail-

able in English and Spanish, at 1-682-800-5737.

Other assistance available

FEMA has provided \$13.4 million to people affected by the Oregon wildfires.

To receive assistance, people must register by visiting disasterassistance.gov, calling 800-621-3362 or using the Federal Emergency Management Agency app.

Help is also available at the FEMA External Outreach Center at the Lane Events Center, 796 W. 13th Ave.; open until further notice, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

• If you have homeowners, flood, automobile or mobile home insurance, call your insurance provider to start your claims process. You must report the insurance settlement amount you receive to FEMA to complete your registration.

• Save your receipts and take photos before you begin the clean-up process. Documentation of losses will help FEMA process your claim.

• Disaster assistance for individuals and business owners may include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs.

• Low-interest disaster recovery loans from the US Small Business Administration are available to homeowners, renters and businesses. Applicants can reach SBA at 800-659-2955 or visit sba.gov/services/disasterassistance. During a disaster declaration, homeowners and renters can be considered for SBA loans, not just businesses.

Senators

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there are far more Democratic voters in the state than Republicans.

Of Oregon's 2,924,292 registered voters, more than 1 million of them are Democrats — 35.7%. Nonaffiliated voters are the second largest group at 32.1%, and Republicans make up 25.7%.

Moore said a greater percentage of Republicans tend to turn out than Democrats — which helps the GOP's chances. Nonaffiliated voters participate at a much lower rate than either major party.

Democrat Shemia Fagan

Civil rights attorney Fagan joined the House of Representatives in 2013, and made her way to the Senate in 2019 by defeating a long-time Democrat incumbent in a contested primary.

She has pushed and voted for bills against the wishes of her party leadership during her time in the Legislature, and said she will bring the same independence to auditing the state government.

Leading the audits division, Fagan said, she will focus on trying to improve the function of state government as opposed to playing "gotcha" with agencies. "It's not about bashing services. It's about improving services," she said. "I am committed to making sure that public services work best for the people who need them most."

Fagan has been a part of efforts to expand ballot access and said that would continue in the secretary of state's office. She said she will expand Oregon's automatic voter registration system beyond the Department of Motor Vehicles to other state agencies to boost voter participation.

She will also work to change state rules to allow all ballots postmarked by election day to count. Currently, ballots only qualify if they arrive at a counting

location by 8 p.m. on election day.

The state got closer to the goal of making every mailbox a ballot box, but "we need to complete that," Fagan said.

She said she supports efforts to expand voter access because those are inherently pro-Democracy. She said the secretary of state has a responsibility to push back on misinformation peddled about the elections or incidents of voter fraud.

"I don't believe that voting rights should be a partisan issue," Fagan said.

Fagan has raised more than \$1.5 million for her campaign this year and spent \$1.36 million, according to the latest available campaign finance data. Her largest contributors include unions and national progressive organizations, including Emily's List.

As of Oct. 9, she had about \$230,000 in her campaign account.

Republican Kim Thatcher

Small business owner Thatcher said much of her work over the past 16 years in public office has been geared toward accountability and transparency in government.

"These are issues that relate directly to the secretary of state's office," Thatcher said.

She joined the House of Representatives in 2005 and served there for 10 years before winning the Senate District 13 seat in 2014. She won re-election two years ago.

Thatcher said she would particularly like to make public records more easily accessible for Oregonians.

"Average Oregonians need to be able to follow the money," she said. "They need to be able to find it out for themselves."

In the short legislative session earlier this year, Thatcher carried a bill that would have improved the independence of the public records advocate position. The bill was among many that died after Republicans walked out of session in protest of a greenhouse gas emissions cap-and-trade bill.

Thatcher also said the state needs to conduct studies into why voters don't participate in the electoral process and figure out ways to encourage them to vote. She said strides have been made in Oregon to increase the number of voters, but the rate of participation could still improve.

While rates of voter fraud in the state are vanishingly low, Thatcher said an analysis of the system should be conducted so voters can have confidence their vote will matter.

On audits, Thatcher said she wants to use the office of secretary of state to "get Oregon back on track" after a challenging year that required government responses to COVID-19, historic wildfires, ongoing protests and a recession.

An audit into the state's response to the coronavirus pandemic would in particular be a "target-rich environment," she said.

Thatcher has raised nearly \$550,000 for her campaign this year and spent about \$380,000, according to the latest available campaign finance data. She's received money from groups including timber companies, the Oregon Firearms Federation, Timber Unity and her own businesses.

As of Oct. 9, she has about \$180,000 in her campaign account.

Progressive and pacific green Nathalie Paravicini

As a candidate representing the Progressive and Pacific Green parties, naturopathic doctor Paravicini is campaigning to bring more attention to the issues she cares about.

Chief among these is ranked choice voting, which is a system where voters rank candidates for office by preference instead of giving their vote to just one candidate. This year, Benton County is using ranked choice voting for applicable elections and there is some effort to expand the practice statewide.

"For me, winning is changing the political debate, in addition to getting to the office," Paravicini said. "Making

ranked choice voting something that everyone has heard of and a dinner table discussion, I consider that winning the election."

Before moving to Oregon, Paravicini was involved in politics and community organizing in Texas, which included running for lieutenant governor in 2002.

She believes the Democratic party needs to be pushed in a more progressive direction, similar to how the Tea Party moved the Republican party further right.

According to Secretary of State records, Paravicini does not have a political action committee to raise or spend money on her campaign.

Libertarian Kyle Markley

The 2020 Secretary of State race marks the fifth time Markley has run for public office in Oregon. The four previous attempts were to represent House District 30, the seat currently held by Rep. Janeen Sollman, D-Hillsboro.

Markley did not return several attempts to contact him for this story.

On his website, Markley described the Secretary of State job as mostly administrative and said he would strive for independence in the role, saying Republicans and Democrats could not be trusted to act in an honest manner.

"As a Libertarian Secretary of State, I will hold both major parties in equal disdain and will simply work to improve systems impartially and without regard to political fallout," he wrote.

According to Secretary of State records, Markley does not have a political action committee to raise or spend money on his campaign.

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