

Record

Continued from Page 1B

stunning number of Oregon towns. From the Santiam Canyon to Southern Oregon, the Oregon Coast to the Clackamas River, few places on the state's west side were spared.

A big difference was that in the past, Oregon's largest wildfires stayed mostly in the forest or remote grassland. This year, fires roared into towns or ignited nearby, whipped up on high winds and bone dry fuels that left little time for defense.

Ballou said the only apt historical analogy for this year's fires came 80 years ago. In 1936, a wildfire fueled by high east winds roared into the South Coast town of Bandon, destroying the town and killing 10 people.

"It's not like the winds we saw on Sept. 7 and 8 were unprecedented — they've occurred a few times in our history and they're going to come again," Ballou said.

A 2020 or 1936 style disaster typically requires a handful of ingredients: dry fuels, extended drought, extreme winds and ignition sources. And the problem, Ballou said, is that the ingredients for that perfect storm are happening more often.

"Unfortunately, we're probably looking at the future," he said. "Until we take meaningful action, this is going to keep happening."

(Story continues below)

Rising occurrence of giant wildfires

Terrible wildfires are nothing new in Oregon's history, whether it's the Bandon example or the Tillamook Burns of 1933 to 1951.

The largest wildfires in state history are actually believed to have taken place in the 1800s. The Silverton Fire of 1865 is listed as Oregon's largest at 988,000 acres. A number of other fires apparently reached 400,000 to 800,000 acres in those early days.

The era of giant fires largely came to an end with the creation of the Forest Service and Oregon Department of Forestry, which brought almost a century of aggressive suppression.

Over the decades, that's led to an extreme buildup of fuels in the forest that, combined with rising temperatures, led to the return of megafires in Oregon beginning with the 2002 Biscuit (500,000 acres) in Southern Oregon and B&B Complex (90,000 acres) on Santiam Pass.

"It was a wake-up call," Oregon State University forestry professor John Bailey told the Statesman Journal in 2019. "It was that 'ah-ha' moment, showing us that past management policies and climate change would make these types of fires more common."

That's exactly how it has worked out. In the decade before Biscuit and B&B — from 1992 to 2001 — Oregon wildfires burned an average of 198,000 acres per year, according to the NWCC. In the years between 2002 and 2017, that number jumped to an average of 433,541



In this Aug. 17, 2002, file photo, a Sikorsky 61 helicopter prepares to refuel in Agness, Ore., as a column of smoke rises from the Biscuit Fire. JOHN GRESS / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Homes destroyed by wildfire

2020: 4,009

2019: 2

2018: 14

2017: 16

2016: 1

2015: 60

acres burned each year.

From 2012 to 2020, the average jumps to 650,000 acres burned per year.

And the fires have become increasingly dangerous. While Oregon was sparsely populated back in the 1800s, the situation has changed, with Oregon's fast-growing population pushing into the wildland urban interface.

(Story continues below)

Oregon had a number of very close calls in the past five years. The Chetco Bar Fire in 2017 came within a few miles and a shift in the weather of burning into Brookings, with a population of almost 8,000 people. The Eagle Creek Fire, also in 2017, trapped 150 hikers and shut down I-84 while threatening Cascade Locks.

Numerous large fires ignited and burned for weeks in Southern Oregon in 2018, but with a big wind event, it could have been far worse.

In other words, the ingredients for a 2020-style blowup have been around numerous times in recent years. And there's a good chance they will return in Augusts and Septembers to come.

"If we keep doing what we're doing,



The Archie Creek Fire throws up a major smoke column northeast of Roseburg on Sept. 12, 2020. US FOREST SERVICE

we're going to keep seeing big fires and the possibility of more small Oregon towns being heavily damaged," Ballou said. "There are a lot of places in Oregon that wouldn't take long for a wildfire to simply erase from the map."

Zach Urness has been an outdoors re-

porter, photographer and videographer in Oregon for 12 years. Urness is the author of "Best Hikes with Kids: Oregon" and "Hiking Southern Oregon." He can be reached at zurness@StatesmanJournal.com or (503) 399-6801. Find him on Twitter at @ZachsORoutdoors.

RESTAURANT INSPECTIONS

Continued from Page 4A

Dairy Queen

Location: 3255 Lancaster Drive NE, Salem
Date: Oct. 7
Score: 97
Priority violations
● Food-contact surfaces are not clean, specifically: Piercing edge of the can opener observed with buildup. **Point deduction: 3.**

Dede's

Location: 5757 Commercial St. SE #106, Salem
Date: Oct. 5 (reinspected Oct. 6)
Score: 91
Oct. 5: Priority violations
● Temperature measuring devices are not provided or readily accessible for checking food temperatures, specifically: Unable to locate food probe thermometer. **Point deduction: 3.**
● A test kit is not provided or is not accurate enough to measure the concentration of sanitizing solutions, specifically: Unable to locate chlorine test strips for dish machine. **Point deduction: 3.**
● Working containers of poisonous or toxic materials are not clearly labeled, specifically: Observed unlabelled spray bottle containing AF79 concentrate disinfectant. **Point deduction: 3.**
Oct. 6: No priority vio-

lations

Domino's

Location: 772 Main St., Dallas
Date: Oct. 7
Score: 100

No priority violations

El Grullense

Location: 3081 Portland Road NE, Salem
Date: Oct. 1
Score: 100

No priority violations

Fiesta Pizza

Location: 1950 Lancaster Drive NE, Suite 131, Salem
Date: Sept. 23 (reinspected Oct. 6)
Score: 97
Sept. 23: Priority violations
● Food-contact surfaces are not clean, specifically: Vent hood above pizza oven soiled with grease and dust build up. **Point deduction: 3.**
Oct. 6: No priority violations

Firehouse Subs

Location: 5930 Ulali Drive NE, Keizer
Date: Oct. 7
Score: 100

No priority violations

Gold Dragon

Location: 4645 Commercial St. SE, Salem
Date: Sept. 21 (reinspected Oct. 1)
Score: 97
Sept. 21: Priority violations
● Food-contact surfaces are not clean, specifically: Meat slicer and vegetable slicer are soiled with encrusted

food debris. **Point deduction: 3.**

Oct. 1: No priority violations

Holiday Inn Express & Suites Hotel

Location: 6150 Keizer Station Blvd. NE, Keizer
Date: Oct. 5
Score: 100

No priority violations

Independent Ice Cream

Location: 226 S Main St., Independence
Date: Oct. 2
Score: 100

No priority violations

Jimmy John's

Location: 601 Lancaster Drive NE, Salem
Date: Oct. 2
Score: 100

No priority violations

Kenny's Kitchen

Location: 612 1st St., Silverton (mobile unit)
Date: Oct. 3
Score: 92

Priority violations
● Potentially hazardous food is not maintained at proper hot or cold holding temperatures, specifically: Chicken measuring 121°F in warming unit. **Point deduction: 5.**

● Hand towels or a hand drying device is not provided at the handwashing sink, specifically: No paper towels at handwash sink in mobile at start of inspection. **Point deduction: 3.**

La Espiga Bakery

Location: 183 S Main St., Jefferson
Date: Sept. 23 (rein-

spected Oct. 1)

Score: 81

Sept. 23: Priority violations

● Potentially hazardous food is not maintained at proper hot or cold holding temperatures, specifically: Prep table in kitchen holding at 48°F. Diced tomatoes measured temperature at 47°F. **Point deduction: 5.**
● Refrigerated, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous food has not been consumed within the required time period or is not properly date-marked, specifically: Machaca dated Sept. 13 in upright refrigerator. **Point deduction: 5.**
● Incorrect methods are used to cool potentially hazardous foods, specifically: Observed large covered and stacked containers of asada and chicken that were maintaining temperature at 68°F and 70°F respectively. **Point deduction: 3.**

● A pest management plan has not been developed or approved for unprotected outer openings, specifically: Observed numerous flies in the kitchen and restaurant. Back door is left open with minimal screen coverage for ventilation purposes. **Point deduction: 3.**

● Hand towels or a hand drying device is not provided at the handwashing sink, specifically: Paper towels not available at handwashing station. **Point deduction: 3.**

Oct. 1: No priority violations

McDonald's

Location: 3025 Lancaster Drive NE #1784, Salem
Date: Oct. 7
Score: 100

No priority violations

Original Roadhouse Grill

Location: 481 Lancaster Drive NE, Salem
Date: Sept. 24 (reinspected Oct. 1)
Score: 82

Sept. 24: Priority violations

● Potentially hazardous food is not maintained at proper hot or cold holding temperatures, specifically: Sliced cheese, cooked beef and raw ground beef 54°F at left side; ribs 48°F, bacon wrapped steak 46°F, raw

beef 46°F at the center; and sliced cheese, shrimp 46°F and raw fish 45°F at the right section of the raw meat reach-in refrigerator. Boiled eggs stacked high measured 49°F at the salad refrigerator. **Point deduction: 5.**
● (REPEAT) The chlorine sanitizer concentration, pH, or temperature is not adequate, specifically: No chlorine residual measured at the bar washer. Chlorine residual measured about 10 PPM at the kitchen dish washer. **Point deduction: 10.**
● Food-contact surfaces are not clean, specifically: Old tomato buildup on tomato slicer and dicer. Blade of the can opener has dried buildup. **Point deduction: 3.**
Oct. 1: No priority violations

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