

VERNONIA RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Fire Season: Regulated Use Closures and IFPL Levels

There has been some confusion from the public on what the fire restrictions are in the City of Vernonia as well as all of Columbia County. With fire season in full swing, we would like to clear up some of the confusion. Like “what do the IFPL (Industrial Fire Precaution Level) levels mean” and “why does the board in front of the fire station change so frequently,” along with the questions on the campfire ban.

The first thing you need to know is that there are two main governing bodies that apply and enforce the fire restrictions in Columbia County. One being the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and the other being the Columbia County Fire Defense Board (CCFDB). ODF sets when fire season will start with a declaration of fire season and the regulated use proclamation. Their enforcement area covers all lands protected by the Northwest Oregon Forest Protection District and all lands within one-eighth mile of that District. The lands that don’t fall into that category are governed by the CCFBD. The CCFBD is made up of the Fire Chiefs from every Fire District in Columbia County. They meet monthly to discuss County wide public safety. Many of the same rules apply for both areas because the CCFBD adopts the regulated use proclamation and uses it to enforce fire bans in the County.

What is the Regulated Use Proclamation? The Regulated Use Proclamation is the regulated fire closures for the public issued at the beginning of each fire season. This proclamation only pertains to the general

public and is not used to regulate industrial activities such as logging operations. Each ODF District puts out their own proclamation to explain to the public what activities are allowed and which are not allowed during fire season. To find the regulated use proclamation in your area you can go online to <https://www.oregon.gov/ODF/Fire/Pages/Restrictions.aspx> and click on “Public Fire Restrictions Map” link.

How do Industrial Fire Precaution Levels work? The IFPL is made up of 4 levels. Level 1 is the announcement of fire season and that fire season requirements are in effect. Level 2 is a limited shut down where certain activities are no longer allowed on the work site. Level 3 is a restricted shutdown and more restrictions are placed on the operation. Level 4 is a complete shutdown where all operations are prohibited. The IFPL only applies to operations.

How are the Regulated Use Proclamation and the IFPL levels connected? In our ODF district the IFPL level is used to govern public activities such as campfire and Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use. During an IFPL level 3 and 4 campfires and OHV use is prohibited. Again every district has a different Regulated Use Proclamation so before you go camping out of the area make sure to educate yourself on what restrictions are in place where you’re going.

How does the CCFBD fit into this? The CCFBD fits into this because ODF has no jurisdiction in our local cities. As was said earlier the CCFBD does



adopt the Regulated Use Proclamation but does have the authority to place added restrictions during fire season, but this has to be done with a unanimous vote by all the Fire Chiefs in the County. To find out the current restrictions in your area be sure to call your local fire department, visit their website, or visit their social media page. The phone number here in Vernonia is (503) 429-8252 and you can visit our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Vernonia-Rural-Fire-Protection-District-100245990705>) where we try to post regular updates on current fire restrictions.

We put these restrictions in place to keep our community and County safe from fire danger. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please call the Fire Department so we can address them.

Insurance Rates

If you own a home you most likely pay for fire insurance. Have you ever wondered how your insurance company calculates how much they charge you? While we do not have any of the math that correlates to an answer, we do know that Insurance Services Office Inc. (ISO) is utilized by most providers to calculate premiums. The company provides a Public Protection Classification (PPC), as these classifications are used for underwriting and calculating those premiums. The PPC program is not intended to analyze all aspects of a comprehensive structural fire suppression delivery system, nor is it for purposes of determining compliance with any state or local law. ISO performs an audit on most fire departments and districts every five years on average. Vernonia’s latest report will become effective October 1, 2018.

The audit looks at a uniform set of criteria, incorporating nationally recognized standards developed by the National Fire Protection Association and the American Water Works Association. The areas include needed fire flows, emergency communications, fire department/district, and water supply. Points are allotted for each category with 10

points to communications, 50 points to the district, and 40 points to water supply. The more points we are able to score in each gives us a lower PPC, which generally calculates to lower insurance rates. Classification 1-8 shows a fire suppression system that includes a credible dispatch, response, and water supply. Classification 8b and 9 show the ability to dispatch, but lacks sufficient water supply, and 10 does not meet minimum requirements.

What does all this gibberish mean?

Currently, if you live in town within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant, your classification is a 4. If you live farther than 1,000 feet from a hydrant, but within five road miles of the station you are an 8b. Outside of five miles of the station, but within our district boundaries is listed as a 10.

With this new audit, effective October 1, 2018, if you live in town within 1,000 feet of a hydrant, the fire district maintained its rating of 4. If you live farther than 1,000 feet from a hydrant, but within five road miles of the station your 8b has been dropped to a 4 as well. This is largely due to the purchase of our new water tender through

the bond and upgrading mutual aid partners to automatic aid. If you live in this area during the effective date, contact your fire insurance to have them reevaluate the rates you are currently paying. Outside of five miles of the station, but within our district boundaries are still rated at a 10.

The final point count was 64.23 out of 105.5 available. Over the course of the next year we will look at ways to improve our score, but there is a portion of this that does involve the community. There is a “Divergence” score that calculates the capabilities of the district. We were docked 7.67 points in this. “Even the best fire department will be less than fully effective if it has an inadequate water supply. Similarly, even a superior water supply will be less than fully effective if the fire department lacks the

equipment or personnel to use the water. The fire suppression rating schedule score is subject to the modification by a divergence factor, which recognizes disparity between the effectiveness of the fire department and the water supply.”

Since our water supply scored a 34.6 out of 40 and the department scored a 24.07 out of 50, with the biggest deficiency in company personnel, more qualified personnel seems to be a common theme.

Again, we will be working on ways to increase these values in the future, as well as trying to find ways to assist those that are over the five road miles from the station. Once again, if you have a little time every month to give, but are unsure of how you can help, PLEASE contact our Volunteer Coordinator Trish Smith or Training Captain Will Steinweg.

Frogger

By Chief Dean Smith

I might be dating myself a bit, but this is one of the few things I think about while out on our local roads. Traffic control at a scene is generally not a pleasant task. Stressful, tedious, and thankless are the top three ways to describe one of the most important jobs one can hold. The flaggers are responsible for the safety of all those on scene. They are the first ones to see traffic coming and are the gate keepers of flow in and out of the area.

As a flagger, we try to find the longest straight approach, while not getting too far from the scene. This will hopefully give drivers more of a chance to slow to a stop versus the “OMG where did this come from” stop. The plan is to move traffic through the scene SLOWLY (more on that later) as soon as we can to facilitate the shortest amount of wait times. Please be patient, as a flagger we are not always up to date on the status of the scene and/or those

involved.

The signs we carry have two sides, STOP and SLOW. First, we will touch on the STOP side. If you are the first car in line, please pull up to the flagger until they stop you. The flagger will make sure that you are close enough to ensure room for others behind you as well as oncoming traffic. And more importantly, the SLOW side. This means SLOW, as in how slow you would want 5,000 lbs. driving by mere inches of you. I understand several comments about “I was only doing 25 miles an hour,” being slow when you were most likely just going 65. But again, we don’t have the luxury of the same protections as you in your vehicle.

With Highway 47 closed for the next two months, and Apiary Road closing for some time as well, traffic on other roads will be higher and more stressful. Please be safe, be patient, leave earlier than normal to allow more travel time, and have an extra cup of coffee to soothe the road rage. Thank you for helping us stay safe while helping you.

Calls responded to July 1-31

Fire	3
Emergency Medical Service	45
Hazardous Condition	1
Service Call	19
Good Intent	4
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	0
Special Incident	0
No Emergency Found	0
False Alarm	0
Total	72