

'Burning Index' Helps Determine Fire Danger

Multi-Colored Warning Signs Mean What They Say

The rating of fire danger on the multi-colored signs in front of fire warden and ranger stations throughout the Emerald Empire is built on a combination of the "burning index" and the weather forecast.

In the case of both the for-

est protective associations (state) and the Willamette National Forest (U.S. Forest Service) considerable manpower and calculations go into posting the signs with their arrows pointing to low, medium, high or extreme.

The Willamette National Forest's Eugene headquarters, for instance, contacts eight ranger stations—Blue River, Cascadia, Detroit, Mill City, McKenzie, Lowell, Oakridge and Rigdon—each day to make up the forest average.

Each of these stations, in turn, have gotten burning indices from lookout and guard stations in its district.

What the lookout and the fire guard reports is the burning index which is gained through the use of instruments which tell the chances of a fire starting in the woods, and the rate it would spread if it did start.

One measurement is of fuel moisture—the dryness of material on the forest floor.

A set of fuel sticks are measured. These sticks are small pieces of wood of certain weight, which are constantly exposed to the weather. Since the stick's dry weight is known, the weighing of it tells how much moisture is present. The

sticks are representative of material out in the woods.

The other measurement going into the burning index is of wind speed. This speed, which tells the forest guard how fast a fire will spread if it's started, is measured by an anemometer which counts the revolutions of a set of small cups exposed to

the wind. The wind velocity is measured in miles per hour.

From these two measurements—fuel moisture and wind speed—comes the burning index. A high wind speed and low fuel moisture reading would give a high burning index, while a low wind speed and high fuel moisture would give a lower index.

An arbitrary scale of 0 to 100 is used to report the index—low is from 0 to 9; medium is from 10 to 15; high is from 16 to 35 and anything over 36 is considered extreme.

To this burning index is added the weather forecast and the result is the fire danger. An east wind, which for most part is warm and drying, added to a high index spells potential fire trouble. On the other hand, a cool, damp westerly wind added to a low index means much less fire danger.

So those signs really mean what they say.

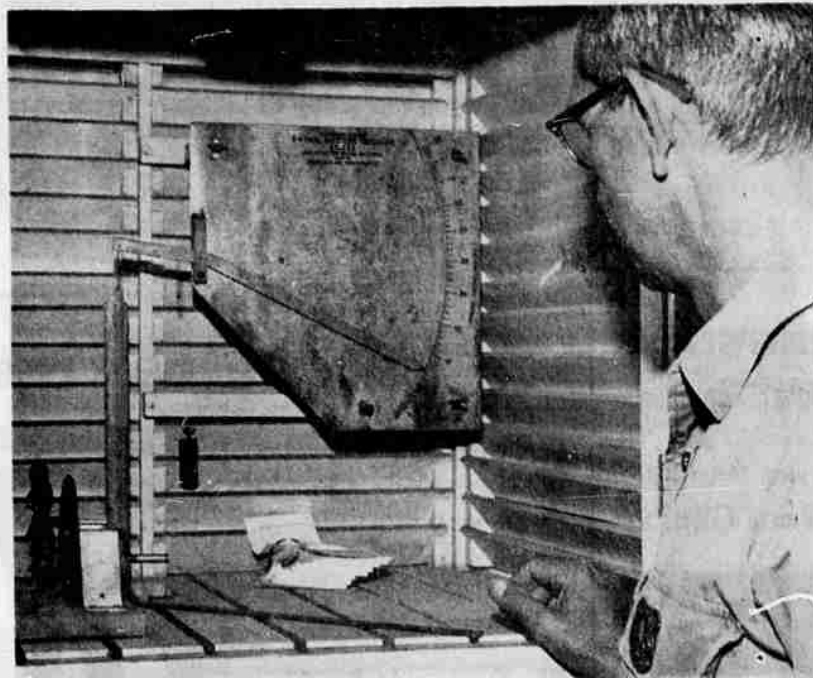
One note of caution: Because of the rugged terrain of the Oregon mountain areas, danger ratings change from area to area. One shouldn't assume that because the sign at Blue River said the danger is low, the same will apply over in the Santiam country.

UO Graduate Gets Idaho Post

Bert C. Cross, 43, who received a master's degree from the University of Oregon in 1952, has been appointed chairman of the Department of Journalism at the University of Idaho, the Associated Press reported.

Cross is a former Spokane reporter and copy editor. His bachelor's degree is from the University of Washington. He was on the faculty of Michigan State University before accepting the position at Idaho.

The Idaho appointment was announced by D. R. Theophilus, president of the university.



'Fuel Stick'

Robert H. Mealey, ranger of the Blue River Forest Service district, weighs the "fuel stick" he keeps in his weather station. The stick represents the litter on the forest floor and its weight indicates the amount of moisture of potential forest fire fuel.

Springfield Collections Set Record

The City of Springfield collected 89.2 per cent of its total 1961-62 tax levy, the highest record of collections in the city's history, City Recorder William Mansell reported Friday.

Mansell, in a budget report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1962, said tax collections totaled \$358,782.88. This exceeds last year's collections by almost one per cent, the recorder said.

During 1961-62, the city received \$3,841,628.73 in revenues, or 101.2 per cent of the total budget. During the same period, the city expended \$2,799,164, or 73.8 per cent of the total budget.

"The city's current financial position is excellent," Mansell said, "and the cash position of each of the city's funds has exceeded budget expectations for the 1962-63 fiscal year."

Short-term investments in U.S. Treasury bills in the amount of \$635,787 matured during June, 1962, and yielded total interest earnings of \$4,212.53, Mansell reported. Short-term investments made during June amounted to \$447,805 and are expected to yield more than \$2,100, the recorder added.

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