

# FIRE: 3,510 residential fires in Oregon during the holidays from 2012-16

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estimated roughly 10 fires forced out the occupants. Umatilla County Fire District Chief Scott Stanton estimated the agency handled 36-40 residential fires this year, from kitchen burns to full-blown blazes that destroyed homes. Somewhere in the area of 12-15 of those fires, he said, displaced the occupants.

Ten people at a house on East Cherry Avenue, Hermiston, had to seek shelter due to a fire from an electric heating source. The icy morning of Jan. 24 was the scene for a fire that tore through the Pendleton home at 1525 S.E. Alexander Place. Fire on March 6 ruined the home at space 14 of 82276 Hat Rock Road and consumed the basement and main floor of 39047 Missouri Gulch Road, about 16 miles northwest of Pendleton. The following day, a malfunctioning furnace created the fire that displaced a Hermiston family of six from their duplex on the 900 block of Orchard Avenue.

The *East Oregonian* reported on at least a dozen more local house fires, including the Whitesells, a March 10 fire at 2600 S.W. Goodwin Ave., Pendleton, that displaced a family and their 20-pound iguana, and the July 16 arson at a Pilot Rock home where one man died.

The Oregon State Fire Marshal reported from 2012-16 there were 3,510 residential fires during the holiday period Nov. 22 through Jan. 15. The fires resulted in 14 deaths, 194 injuries and more than \$61.2 million in property loss.

Dollar losses per residential fire in 2014 averaged \$16,500, according to the U.S. Fire Administration's latest edition of "Fire in the



Photo contributed by the East Umatilla County Rural Fire Protection District  
**Fire destroyed a home Thursday afternoon at 55825 Wildhorse Road near Athena. The East Umatilla County Rural Fire Protection District reported the occupants were uninjured.**



Photo contributed by Jackie Whitesell  
**The Whitesell family lost almost everything in their home at 45542 Mission Road near Pendleton when a heat lamp fell into a chick pen in March. The family rebuilt and moved back into the home in late October.**

United States," a 97-page report using fire data spanning 2005-2014. The Fire Administration estimated there were 375,400 residential building fires each of those years.

"National estimates show that on average from 2005 to 2014, 96 percent of residential structure fires,

96 percent of associated deaths, 97 percent of injuries, and 95 percent of dollar losses occurred in residential buildings," the report states.

The most recent local house fire was Thursday afternoon at 55825 Wildhorse Road. The East Umatilla County Rural

Fire Protection District responded and found flames engulfing the cabin. Chief Dave Baty said crews could only protect the surrounding areas, but the occupants made it safely to a neighbor's house.

Jackie Whitesell said they still have to finish their home, from shelving to landscaping to putting on the back porch. She said their children did well throughout the ordeal, often seeing the event as an adventure. She credited the community for all its kindness and for God giving the family strength.

"My mantra has been we are victors, not victims," she said.

Even so, there have been moments that knocked her back, she said, such as realizing — yet again — an item she wanted "was all burned up."

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## Fire marshal urges fire prevention

With the holiday season in full swing, state Fire Marshal Jim Walker wants Oregonians to remember fire prevention when decorating and entertaining.

### Tree care and decorating tips:

- Choose a fresh, healthy tree with a deep-green color and flexible needles.
- When you get the tree home, cut off the bottom two inches of the trunk. This creates a fresh, raw cut for the tree to soak up water.
- Water your tree daily. A tree may consume between a quart and a gallon of water per day.
- Place the tree at least three feet away from any heat source such as a fireplace, woodstove, space heater, heating vent, baseboard heater, or radiator.
- Use only noncombustible or flame resistant materials to trim a tree.
- Always unplug tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- After the holiday season or whenever your tree dries out, promptly dispose of it and other dry greenery. Burning a tree in a stove or fireplace is extremely dangerous; proper disposal includes recycling or pick-up by a disposal service.
- Never burn wrapping paper in the fireplace or wood stove. Wrapping paper burns at higher temperatures than wood and can cause a chimney fire.

- Maintain your holiday lights. Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, and broken or cracked sockets.
- Do not overload electrical sockets. Do not link more than three light strands, unless the manufac-

turer's directions indicate it is safe.

- Protect electrical cords from damage. To avoid shock or fire hazards, cords should never be pinched by furniture, placed under rugs, located near heat sources or attached by nails or staples.
- Make sure all extension cords and electrical decorations used outdoors are marked for outdoor use.

### Candle safety

- Consider using battery-operated flameless candles, which can look and smell like real candles.
- Never leave a burning candle unattended. Extinguish candles when you go to bed, leave a room, or before leaving the house.
- Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn. Keep candles at least one foot from combustibles including clothing, curtains, upholstered furniture, greenery, and decorations.
- Place candles out of reach of small children and pets.
- Avoid candles with items embedded in them such as twigs, flowers, or leaves. These items can ignite or even explode.

- **General fire safety**
- Keep combustibles at least three feet from heat sources.
- For increased protection, have working smoke alarms on every level of your home (including the basement), in each bedroom, and in the hallway outside each bedroom.
- Make a home fire escape plan and practice it with your family and any overnight guests.
- Keep escape routes clear of clutter so you can escape quickly in case of fire.

## STREETS: 70 percent of maintenance money goes to streets in good condition

Continued from 1A

and residential/local streets, are rated "good" with a 59 rating. The lowest score, 57, is for neighborhood/local roads.

- The street system has an average remaining service life of 17.4 years, down by 0.7 from 2016.

Although Green said the city delayed many street projects this year while public works repaired and replaced aging municipal water lines, city staff has long maintained that the \$481,000 the city raised through the street utility fee would slow the bleeding rather than stanch it.

Under the city's current \$781,000 streets budget, Green said the system would see its index number decrease by a half-point average each year. To maintain the status quo, the city would have to spend \$1.1 million on street maintenance each year.

Growing the streets budget would require serious council discussion about how the city would find the money to bolster road maintenance.

Councilor Dale Primmer said there are still many roads in the system in need of major repair. In the southern Pendleton ward he represents, Primmer said Southwest Perkins Avenue was in poor shape before it was repaired

**"I don't know if there's an appetite for it. Maybe there's a great idea, but I haven't heard it."**

— Councilor Dale Primmer, on creating a new tax to bolster street funding

and there are others like it that haven't been fixed.

In Councilor Becky Marks' Ward 1, she pointed to streets on South Hill and the Riverside areas that also need attention.

The city spends 70 percent of its maintenance money on streets in good condition because staff believes it makes those dollars stretch further. Roads in good condition typically require cheaper repairs like crack seals and slurry seals rather than the full reconstructions poor streets usually need.

At the meeting, Councilor Scott Fairley suggested the city do away with its 70-30 formula, and instead use all of its money to maintain its top-rated roads.

Regardless of how the council allocates the streets budget, the most pressing obstacle is making up the gap in funding.

Green said the city will receive more road main-

tenance money through increased state gas tax approved by the Oregon Legislature last month. But the exact amount the city will receive from the state is still unknown and there's no guarantee it will fully plug the gap.

As a part of future discussions, Marks said the council could consider mounting another campaign for a local gas tax. The last time the city sought a gas tax in 2015, it was decisively rejected by Pendleton voters.

Given the previous electoral defeats at the ballot box, Primmer isn't sure creating a new source of revenue to bolster street funding is in the cards.

"I don't know if there's an appetite for it," he said. "Maybe there's a great idea, but I haven't heard it."

Scouring the general fund for money to divert it toward streets might not be any easier, Primmer said, because most of its dedicated to public safety as is.

Mayor John Turner doesn't know how the council will fill the gap, but he anticipated there would be more discussion over the course of 2018.

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## STANDOFF: Trial began Nov. 14 in Las Vegas

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as well as likely policy, ethical and legal violations among senior and supervisory staff" at the Bureau of Land Management's Office of Law Enforcement and Security.

Wooten wrote that supervisory agents repeatedly mocked the defendants; displayed "clear prejudice" against the Bundys, their supporters and Mormons; and displayed altered booking photos of Cliven Bundy and other defendants in a federal office and in an office presentation.

The memo described "heavy handedness" by government officers as they prepared to impound Cliven Bundy's cattle.

He said some officers "bragged about roughing up Dave Bundy, grinding his face into the ground and Dave Bundy having little bits of gravel stuck in his face."

Dave Bundy, one of Cliven Bundy's sons, was arrested April 6, 2014, while videotaping men he suspected were federal agents near his father's ranch.

Wooten also alleged that supervisory agents failed to turn over required discovery evidence to the prosecution team that could help the defense or be used to question the credibility of a witness, as required by law.

Cliven Bundy's lawyer Bret O. Whipple said the

new information was "quite a development." The memo has not been filed with the court but was shared with the defense.

"In my mind, I think the case should be dismissed by next Tuesday," he told The Oregonian/OregonLive. "I think I can get my client home for Christmas."

Trisha Young, a spokeswoman for the Nevada U.S. Attorney's Office, told the newspaper Friday that her office declined to comment.

They're also accused of using or carrying a firearm in a crime of violence, threatening a federal law enforcement officer, obstruction of justice and extortion.

Their trial began Nov. 14 in Las Vegas.



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### Questions?

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