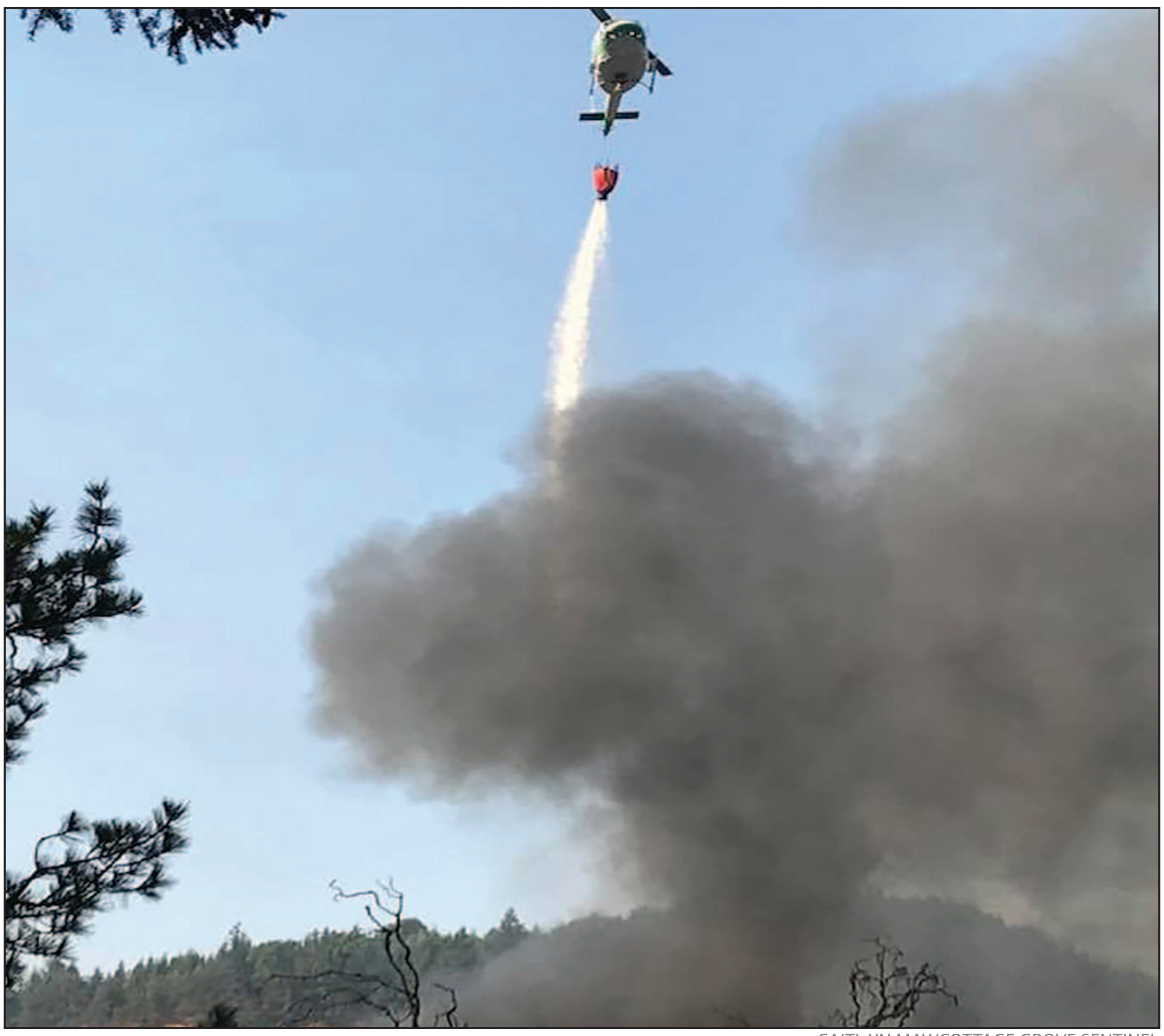

CAITL;YN MAY/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Firefighting equipment from several area agencies battled fires in Dorena and Cottage Grove this past week.

FIRES *from A1*

Three structures, several outbuildings and vehicles were burned in the fire. As of 9 p.m. last Wednesday night, no injuries were reported.

The fire was the second in the area in the last seven days as fires along the west coast continue to burn and force evacuations. Last Friday, a vehicle sparked six separate fires along Interstate-5 approximately 10 miles south of Cottage Grove. Days later, a grass fire ignited near milepost 175 closing Interstate-5 SB. The cause of the fire has not yet been released.

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DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Are you ready?

Disasters Happen. Prepare Now! September is National Preparedness Month

Recent wildfires, annual winter storms and seasonal flooding are all stark reminders of the importance of preparing for disasters. Oregon's Office of Emergency Management urges individuals, families, businesses and local organizations to take time during September – National Preparedness Month – to learn about potential hazards, make a plan for what to do in the aftermath of a disaster and build a preparedness kit (or add something new to your existing kit). These essential steps are the foundation of basic preparedness.

There are a variety of ways to approach disaster preparedness and many resources available on the OEM website, Ready.gov, The American Red Cross and more. They offer a wide range of preparedness perspectives on the specific essentials to include in a kit. This year, however, OEM is focusing on less-talked about elements of preparedness such as learning life-saving skills, checking your insurance coverage and saving for an emergency.

"We recognize that people are at different phases in their personal preparedness," says OEM Director Andrew Phelps, "and it can feel overwhelming to maintain plans and kits and share preparedness strategies with family members and friends. Once the plans are made and practiced, and the kit is established, it's important to consider what you need for long-term recovery," he says.

- **Life-saving skills:** Life-saving skills include putting smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home, learning how to turn off utilities like water or natural gas, and taking part in a CPR or first-aid class.
- **Insurance coverage:** Insurance is a first line of defense when it comes to disaster preparedness. Check to see what your homeowner or renter policy covers, and take photos of important documents and personal belongings to help you quickly file a claim.
- **Saving for an emergency:** Plan financially for the possibility of a disaster. Keep copies of lease agreements, mortgage papers, tax statements and other documents to re-establish financial accounts and provide if necessary for an insurance claim. Keep a small amount of cash at home in a safe place, especially small bills if ATMs and credit cards are not accepted after a disaster.

Oregon Governor Kate Brown issued a proclamation in support of National Preparedness Month and OEM promotes being 2 Weeks Ready for earthquakes and other disasters. A series of animated one-minute videos are available, along with easy to read graphics and brochures. Each brochure offers helpful tips on what to do 2 minutes, 2 hours, 2 days and 2 weeks after a disaster.

"A major disaster could leave large areas of our state without resources for days and weeks," says Phelps. "Having 2 weeks of food, water and other emergency supplies is critical for individuals and families who may need to take care of themselves until formal response resources can reach them."

Returning home after a fire

Home structure fires pose a significant, potentially deadly threat. According to the National Fire Protection Association, U.S. fire departments responded to an average 358,300 home structure fires per year between 2010 and 2014. Statistics regarding home fires in Canada are somewhat elusive, but a 2007 report from the Council of Canadian Fire Marshals and Fire Commissioners indicated home structure fires accounted for 73 percent of all fire deaths in the jurisdictions that contributed to that year's report.

A host of factors can contribute to home fires. Cooking equipment, heating equipment and electrical distribution and lighting equipment can spark home structure fires. In such instances, homeowners may soon find themselves picking up the pieces after their homes, and many of their possessions, have burned to the ground.

The U.S. Fire Administration offers the following tips to men and women who must recover after their homes have fallen victim to structure fires.

• Recognize the need to be patient. When a home is on fire, firefighters may take certain actions to ensure the fire is completely extinguished. For example, holes might be drilled in the walls of homes to make sure there are no hidden flames. In addition, holes may be cut in the roof to let out heat and smoke. Such actions can save lives and even homes, but the resulting cleanup can be time-consuming. When returning home for the first time after a fire, men and women must recognize the need to remain patient as they formulate and execute a plan to clean up their homes.

• Contact a disaster relief service. The local branch of a disaster relief service like the Salvation Army can help victims of home structure fires find lodging, food, clothing, and medicine. Don't hesitate to reach out to such organizations for assistance.

• Do not enter the home until the fire department deems it safe to do so. Even fires that appear to be out can start again. In addition, the USFA advises that roofs and floors, even those that appear sturdy to the naked eye, can still fall down after the blaze has been extinguished. Avoid entering a home until you have been given the go-ahead by the local fire department.

• Contact the police and your insurance agent. Victims of home structure fires whose homes are uninhabitable should contact their local police departments and their insurance agents to inform them about the fire and that they will not be living there. Police departments and/or home insurance providers may require that holes in walls and broken windows be boarded up to prevent trespassers from gaining entry to the home. Renters should contact their landlords immediately as well.

• Be careful with items that were not burned. The USFA notes that even items that were not burned may still have been ruined by smoke or been soaked with water. Carefully clean any items that you think can be salvaged before using them.

• Save all receipts spent on repairs. Insurance companies may require receipts to confirm spending on repairs, and such receipts may also be required for people who want to claim any losses on their tax returns.

Home structure fires can turn lives upside down. But following the advice of local fire departments and accepting the assistance of local relief organizations can make the recovery process go as smoothly as possible.

PUT TOGETHER A PLAN

Make sure all the pieces are in place to render you and your family prepared in the event of a natural disaster.

- Listen to radio or television newscasts for the latest weather information, and follow all evacuation directions and suggestions.
- Keep a stock of non-perishable food items as well as bottled water on hand inside your home.
- Keep a 72 Hour Kit on hand inside your home that is easy to get to in the event of a disaster.

For more information and tips on disaster response and preparedness, contact your local emergency services center.
South Lane Fire & Rescue • 233 Harrison Ave, Cottage Grove 541-942-4493 • 55 South 1st Street, Creswell 541-895-2506

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