Firefighters prepare for another busy season

The Oregon Department of Forestry has begun gearing up for this summer's inevitable wildfires.

A lot of preparation goes on behind the scenes each winter and spring, said Blake Ellis, the agency's interim fire operations manager.

"We essentially double our firefighting forces going into the summer, when wildfire risk is highest," Ellis said.

Readiness activities include ensuring contracts for equipment, aircraft and other resources have been signed and hundreds of miles of fire hose have been cleaned and rolled, ready for use statewide.

A new policy governing use of drones has been adopted.

Hiring of seasonal firefighters is under way. New firefighters will attend training at ODF and interagency fire schools across the state in June.

Permanent and returning firefighters will take fire line refresher training over the next two months.

Last year, ODF had great success testing infrared technology, the agency reported. Carried on aerial vehicles, the equipment sawed through heavy smoke on two Oregon wildfires – Horse Prairie and Eagle Creek.

The technology provided sharp images and real-time fire mapping for fire managers.

"From detection to fire-mapping and active wildfire suppression, aircraft continue to play a critical role in the fight to save lives, resources and property," said Neal Laugle, ODF's aviation manager.

Contracted aircraft flew 1,477 hours on firefighting missions for ODF last year, more than 100 hours above average, he said.

Courtesy ODF

Firefighters train last year at an interagency fire school in Sweet Home.

Crab, Seafood & Wine 2018 Astoria Warrenton Festival

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