

METRO RESPONSE TO REGIONAL WILDFIRES

Date: October 29, 2020
Department: Office of the COO
Meeting Date: November 5, 2020

Prepared by: Courtney Patterson, 503-349-5053
Presenter: Marissa Madrigal, Chief Operating Officer
Length: 10 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

Chief Operating Officer, Marissa Madrigal will provide a report on Metro's response to the wildfires in Clackamas and Washington Counties

ACTION REQUESTED

None at this time.

We will discuss wildfire mitigation and resilience at the December 8 work session.

On December 10, Metro's emergency manager, Courtney Patterson, will present on our Emergency Operations Plan and on a resolution to adopt the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

Keep Council informed about Metro's actions and roles during the recent wildfire and smoke incidents. Identify and discuss any needs for the emergency management program.

POLICY QUESTION(S)

What did we do well during the wildfire response and what could we do to improve our readiness?

POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

Develop IGAs with local governments for Metro's emergency management roles including debris management and sheltering

- Pro – clear agreements, roles, responsibilities, and (if applicable) payment terms
- Cons – challenging to get emergency management partners to complete them.
Terms are generally easier to arrange and more generous during disasters than before.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to partner with regional emergency management professionals through participation in the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization
- Develop training for Metro staff on the incident command system and disaster roles

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

It is necessary to support and invest in emergency management and resilience work to reach equitable societies. Disasters cause disparate impacts for communities of color, individuals with disabilities, and low income families because land use decisions, economic inequities, and disaster recovery policies continue to underserve these groups.

Metro continues to invest labor and funding toward achieving a more equitable and resilient community in greater Portland. The 2030 Regional Waste Plan includes disaster resilience as a main area for work with three goals and 15 actions related to disaster resilience. Emergency management and solid waste partners throughout the region are supportive of Metro continuing to advance its debris management plan and program.

BACKGROUND

On September 8th an historic wind event caused extreme fire danger throughout Oregon. Devastating fires ripped through Marion County and damaged homes and property in Talent and Phoenix, Oregon. Closer to home, the Chehalem Mountain-Bald Peak Fire in Washington County and the Riverside and Beachie Creek fires in Clackamas County caused 1000s to evacuate their homes. At one point, the entirety of Clackamas County was under a “get set” evacuation order. Poor air quality that reached the 500s also affected the whole region.

Metro worked quickly to support our regional partners. At the Oregon Convention Center, two shelters were opened. One housed Clackamas County fire evacuees and another provided unsheltered individuals a place to go to escape the poor air quality. The Expo Center staged Red Cross relief supplies. Our public information team supported partners through social media posts, coordinating messaging campaigns and providing information specific to Metro’s facilities and properties.

Our own operations were also deeply impacted. Metro South Transfer Station in Oregon City closed entirely for five days – the first time such a closure has occurred since the 1996 floods. Metro evacuated the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) facility in Oregon City as a precaution and it remained closed for ten days. Because of persistent hazardous air quality, Metro closed both Metro South and Central to self-haul customers for eight days and the Metro Central HHW operation for eight days. Construction projects were halted and equipment removed from sites at Chehalem Ridge and Newell Creek Canyon. Condors were evacuated from the Johnson Center and twenty-six were moved to Boise, Idaho. Due to the poor air quality, outdoor work at the transfer stations, parks, and the zoo was suspended for a few days. All these actions were unprecedented.

Metro also plays a debris management role during disaster recovery. Although these fires were largely outside Metro’s jurisdictional boundary, WPES has sent senior technical and public information staff to the Clackamas County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to provide additional resources and help plan debris removal. WPES is standing by to provide support and assistance with disposal of debris and hazardous waste as requested by

Clackamas County. Metro has established its own debris acceptance procedures and has worked closely with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to identify appropriate disposal sites and share information about fire debris acceptance criteria at landfills.

ATTACHMENTS

[For work session:]

- Is legislation required for Council action? ☐ Yes ☒ No
- If yes, is draft legislation attached? ☐ Yes ☒ No
- What other materials are you presenting today? Powerpoint