

Mosier Fire Log

February 2012

CALL SUMMARY

| | Feb | YTD | <u>2/11</u> | <u>11 YTD</u> | <u>2/10</u> | <u>10 YTD</u> |
|----------|----------|----------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| MEDICAL: | 0 | 9 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 7 |
| FIRE: | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 |

This is the first time in a long time that Mosier has not been called out in a calendar month. We wish it were because of something we're doing. Thanks everyone for staying safe and healthy!

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PUBLIC MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT:

Subject: **Forestland Classification**
presented by Oregon Department of Forestry
6:00 PM, Thursday, March 15, 2012 in the Legion Hall

Mosierites may start seeing notices by mail from Oregon Department of Forestry concerning reclassification of forest lands.

At issue is a fee, called Fire Patrol, based on a State budget item which pays all of the costs statewide for big fires – permanent staff time, the overhead teams, the bombers, bulldozers, helicopters, hot shots, hand crews, and so on. Once a year, the State projects how much it will spend for the year fighting the big fires, then divides by the number of acres statewide classified as “forestland” with respect to fire only, which the State defines according to specific fuel load types, some of which may not look like “forestland” to you and me. The current process is meant to improve the accuracy of those classifications.

If you see “Fire Patrol” close to the bottom of the right-hand column of a property tax bill, then that tax lot is all or in part classified as forestland. There are then several grades of forestland, depending on the type and degree of fuels, and each grade is assessed at its own rate, which can vary from year to year depending on the State's line item for fire. For the last few years, the fees have come out to about a dollar or two per acre. “Fire Patrol w/IMPS” is a house or other improvement, and a small area around the improvement. For the tax bills I've seen, w/IMPS is usually ODF's flat “surcharge” of \$47.50. A typical Mosier tax bill totals at most \$75-100 to ODF.

I think that's a good deal for all that ODF can bring to a fire. Otherwise the Fire District would have to come up with a way to pay ODF when we need them. The Microwave Fire cost ODF \$3 million. Our current budget is \$170,000 per year.

Keep this in mind: Patrol fees already exist and have for years; Patrol fees are a bargain when it comes to wild fires; and the proposed reclassification affects a very small percentage of acres in the Mosier Fire District. Come to the meeting on March 15 and that is what you'll find out. For better or worse, ODF's postcard may not make that abundantly clear.

In Hood River, the reclassification recently became a political hot potato resulting in all properties within the City becoming exempt from the Patrol fees. Now, when their Fire Department needs the help of ODF, the City of Hood River will get a bill, all because a handful of taxpayers took offense at the Patrol fees.

As Fire Chief, I want to head off any similar result here in Mosier. If you feel strongly that taxpayers shouldn't have to pay Patrol fees *and* Fire District taxes, we need to talk. As noted, Patrol is about responding very effectively to big fires, and, no, ODF will not typically come when called to put out your chimney fire (but, if they have to respond to a big fire started by your chimney, you might get a very big bill from ODF, even if you pay Patrol fees). Fire District taxes are about responding quickly to lives and property, and other services focused on our customers' immediate well being. Frankly, \$170,000 isn't enough to provide all the services we'd like. We will do initial attack on a wildland fire (we have some success at stopping them quickly), but by the time it's over an acre or two we're handing the worst of it over to ODF while we take positions protecting houses.

I have the draft map of the proposed reclassification. All are welcome to come have a look. I'm happy to answer questions, but the short answer to most folks will be that the current reclassification won't change anything on your tax bill. Contact the Fire Chief at **541-478-3333**. There is a wealth of information at http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/centraloregon/forest_classification.shtml. If you have further questions, you can contact David Jacobs at ODF, **541-296-4626**.

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FIRE DISTRICT BUDGET COMMITTEE FORMING:

The Board is looking for **community volunteers** to participate on the budget committee. Budget is due July 15, 2012. Meeting schedule TBD. If you have questions, ideas or opinions about Fire District priorities, we want to hear from you. If interested, please contact the Fire Chief, **541.478.3333**, mosierfire@gmail.com

REMINDER: **Burn permits are required.** Please contact us at **541-478-3333**