Organizing for

FARM FIRE PROTECTION
IN OREGON

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Keep 'em Standing

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INTRODUCTION

Oregon agriculture is now engaged in an all-out program of war production. Food and fiber are vital for victory. Fire could seriously impair the national production program by destroying supplies of these necessary war materials. The nation is depending on Oregon farms as the major source of certain necessary supplies. Oregon produces most of the national supply of fiber flax, fiber indispensable to war equipment. Ninety per cent of the nation's supply of legume cover crop seed is produced on 450,000 acres in Oregon. Food production in other parts of the nation is especially dependent on this supply of seed. It is used in the production of cover crops, which must be used to replace nitrate carrying fertilizers now largely diverted to the manufacture of war explosives.

Grain supplies are important as a reserve of human food and as feed for livestock. Both grain and hay are essential to Oregon's program of increased milk and meat. Food lost by fire cannot be replaced. Losses of homes, buildings, machinery, and livestock are always serious to the individual and the community. The seriousness is multiplied during the emergency because of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of replacement.

The nation-wide Victory Garden Program in 1943 will depend on Oregon for supplies of vegetable seed. Domestic supplies of beet sugar must be increased. The industry depends on Oregon for a substantial share of the seed supplies. At harvest time, any of these crops could easily be destroyed by fire, resulting in a serious financial loss to the grower and a loss of irreplacable strategic materials necessary for the national welfare. Oregon agriculture cannot afford to lose equipment and buildings at this time. Fire is always a menace on farms, especially during the dry summer months. During the war, the dangers are multiplied because of incendiariism, sabotage, and the possibility of enemy air raids with incendiary bombs.

The Emergency Farm Fire Protection Project has for its purpose the protection of these great resources, vital not only for our own people, but to the Nation as well.

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Organizing for Farm Fire Protection in Oregon

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Farm fires cause serious damage to crops, buildings, livestock, and equipment in Oregon each year. Because of the war emergency this damage becomes much more serious since it may represent a loss of food and other crops necessary to the nation-wide success of the war program. Vital equipment, homes, and buildings, difficult if not impossible to replace, may be lost. Only a gross optimist would anticipate that fires would be no worse during war time than in periods of peace. There is every possibility that Oregon farmers may be faced with many more fires this year through incendiarism and sabotage. Because of Oregon's location near the coast, it is by no means impossible that the area could be visited by enemy airplanes that might concentrate on our dry forests and farms with incendiary bombs.

Oregon farms need special fire protection for the duration of the war. In the past, with a few exceptions, the protection of crops, buildings, and equipment has been the responsibility of each individual operator with such volunteer help as might be available. Often the help of willing neighbors has been ineffective because of the lack of organization, leadership, and equipment. To correct these deficiencies and to provide effective rural organizations, the emergency farm fire protection program has been developed.

FIRE PROTECTION PROGRAM STATE WIDE

The Emergency Farm Fire Protection program has been developed with the cooperation of the Oregon State College Extension Service, the State Forestry Department, the State Fire Marshal, the State Defense Council, the United States Forest Service, the United States Grazing Service, Indian Service, and other public agencies. These agencies are cooperating in a program to assist farmers and rural people in organizing and training volunteer fire control groups for every community of the state. As a part of this program, representatives of these agencies have divided each county into areas that can be efficiently served by them. This volunteer program will not replace or duplicate any established fire fighting agency; rather it will supplement and cooperate in making fire protection more effective.
AGENCIES ALREADY IN EXISTENCE

Oregon is especially fortunate in having well-established and well-equipped fire patrol and control organizations for all publicly owned land and for privately owned timber land. Cities also have well-organized fire departments supplemented by many county defense groups. Rural fire districts have been established in a few localized areas. Some counties have taken steps to take advantage of a new law, making it possible for the county court in any county to establish fire control areas.

COUNTY EMERGENCY FARM FIRE PROTECTION PROGRAM

County representatives of the cooperating agencies will be responsible for districting each county and selecting a farm fire chief and an assistant for each district. This districting will be accomplished to secure the best possible correlation with the existing fire control agencies. Training will be provided for the farm fire chiefs and assistant farm fire chiefs in organizing farm fire crews and in handling fires likely to occur in that particular area. Wherever possible, training will be given members of the local crews.

LOCAL FARM FIRE CREWS

Farm fire chiefs and their assistants will be responsible for enlisting and training their own crews from each local area. Crews should consist of 10 to 15 men. After the organization and training are completed, members will receive from county defense councils cards identifying them as members of the county defense organization. Where possible, the farm fire chief should arrange for additional training work for his crew by qualified persons within the county.

The farm fire chief and assistant should become thoroughly familiar with the fire control agencies operating in or adjacent to his community and in the county. He should know the persons in charge of these agencies, how they can be reached quickly in case of emergency, and what assistance, if any, could be rendered in the local area. Crew members can perform a real service in preparing to report disastrous fires by urging a careful examination of all telephone lines in the area to be sure that the lines are in good condition at all times. This service would be appreciated by most rural people with telephones even aside from considering the necessity of quick communication in case of fire.

Advantage should be taken of all established fire reporting agencies, including state and federal forest patrol. There should be
close cooperation between the farm fire organization in the county and community and the airplane lookout organization. These lookouts may render valuable service in reporting fires.

**EQUIPPING FARM FIRE CREWS**

Members will be responsible for assembling their own fire fighting equipment, which will ordinarily consist of equipment already available in the neighborhood. No public funds are available for supplying equipment. Even with ample funds special equipment is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. Many local crews are making purchases of certain standard equipment, financing these purchases through voluntary donations.

Each crew member should have assembled at his own home certain pieces of equipment that he may carry with him when called to a fire. Suggestions are included in the list of equipment that follows.

Each crew should assemble at some central point, preferably the home of the farm fire chief, tools and equipment that can be quickly moved to any fire. It may be possible for many crews to obtain the use of a trailer (four wheels preferred) that can be kept loaded at all times. If such a trailer is not available, the tools should be assembled in tool boxes so that they can be loaded quickly onto a truck or trailer.

The following is a list of suggested machines and instruments that might be included in the crew’s assembled equipment. This would be supplemented by such tools as members might bring with them. Obviously all tools mentioned would not be necessary in all sections of the state; selection would be made according to fire hazards involved.

**Orchard spray rigs.** In many communities in Oregon spray rigs may be available during the fire season. If equipped with rubber tires, these might be trailed to a fire. If not, they might be placed on a loading rack with wheels removed to permit quick loading on a truck.

**Water containers.** Five or more 5- or 10-gallon cans, barrels, or other containers. These should be kept full of water at all times.

**Sacks.** Ten to twelve to a box, which can be quickly submerged to soak them with water. Sacks can also be used to prevent spilling water hauled in open top barrels. Sacks are scarce. These sacks can be those no longer satisfactory for grain if they are not too badly rotted.
Hand tools. Include 2 to 4 or more of the following: shovels (long handled and round points are best); grubbing hoes, mattock, or other heavy hoes; rakes (ordinary garden rakes are a little light, heavy steeled shanked asphaltum rakes are best); brush hooks; axes (in a timber country should include both falling and swamping axes); falling and bucking saws, sledges, and wedges (will be useful in timber); pitchforks, preferably with heavy short tines; water canteens or water bags for drinking water, 1- or 2-gallon size; files for sharpening equipment. There are specially designed hand tools for fire fighting adapted to different areas. If crews wish to purchase these special tools they should first consult those in charge of instruction.

Fire extinguishers. It would be desirable if each crew could have at least 4 knapsack or back pumps. These have a capacity of 5 gallons of water and are the most satisfactory extinguishers for general rural use. They are available on many Oregon farms. Smaller knapsack spray pumps are an effective substitute and are more generally available. Hand spray pumps of bucket or other types will be useful. At least 1 hand extinguisher of the carbon tetrachloride type would be desirable for gasoline or oil fires and fires involving electricity.

Miscellaneous equipment. Each outfit should include at least 1 wire cutter, crow bar, wrecking bar, electric lantern or flashlight, and first aid kit. Tools will be much easier to find if the ends of all wooden handles are painted with bright red paint.

SUPPLEMENTARY EQUIPMENT

One of the first duties of the fire crew will be to make a survey of the area. As one part of this survey, all equipment in the area that might be useful, including additional spray rigs, tractors, plows, disks, and other implements, should be located. Tractors with bulldozers are available in many communities. In western Oregon there are many portable irrigation systems that might be quickly transported and would furnish large volumes of water under good pressure. There are many tank wagons in Oregon communities. Owners of these should be urged to locate them where they can be quickly reached. By all means, they should be kept full of water.

All sources of water in the area should be noted by the crews, particularly those where large quantities of water could be obtained quickly for filling barrels, tank trucks, or spray rigs. The average farm water system is usually too slow.

Crew members should know the location of all homes in the area with telephone service where emergency calls might be placed.
FIRE HAZARD SURVEY

The removal of hazards will prevent many serious fires. Crew members should make a careful survey of the farmstead of every resident in the area, noting any fire hazards that might exist. An effort should be made to get the cooperation of the owner in eliminating these before the fire season. The following list indicates a few common hazards and suggested remedies:

1. **Grass or weed growth against buildings.** All dead grass and weeds should be removed from a strip at least 10 feet wide around all buildings.

2. **Roofs.** The removal of all moss and the repair of broken and warped shingles can prevent many fires from starting.

3. **Gasoline storage.** Gasoline should not be stored in or near buildings. Serious explosions and fires have occurred through the ignition of gasoline fumes by a spark from static electricity. Cars or rubber-tired tractors should be grounded when being filled with gasoline.

4. **Grain fields.** Any field of grain, hairy vetch, peas, flax, or other crop that must be thoroughly ripened before harvesting, should be protected by a plowed or cultivated fire guard extending completely around the field. As an additional factor of safety, large fields should be divided with cultivated strips.

5. **Hay storage.** Spontaneous combustion causes many serious barn fires every year. Only well cured hay should be stored in barns. Hay stacks should be located some distance from farm buildings.

6. **Rubbish.** Piles of inflammable rubbish should be burned well in advance of the fire season.

7. **Dead snags.** Sparks from burning snags, blown by the wind, spread fires. Snags near hazardous areas should be felled.

8. **Farm water supply.** Wire the electric pump so that fire in any building will not cut the circuit.

9. **Harvesting equipment.** Many harvest fires can be prevented by having the engines of all harvesting equipment in good condition and equipped with some type of spark arrestor.

10. **Hazards in the dwelling.** Home owners should be cautioned against such fire hazards as faulty flues, unprotected stoves, faulty electric wiring, and the use of inflammable cleaning fluids.

11. **Matches and smoking.** Obviously carelessness on the part of smokers may cause many fires. Matches around the farmstead are likewise dangerous. They should be stored in a safe place.
PREVENTIVE MEASURES ON EACH FARM

The crew member should enlist the cooperation of each farm operator in placing certain simple fire fighting equipment around the farmstead. Each building should be equipped with a ladder to permit quick access to the roof. Sparks or inflammable material might cause disastrous fires as they light on roofs. These might be controlled without any particular effort if roofs could be reached quickly. Stock water troughs and water storage tanks should be kept filled with water at all times. Two or three barrels of water should be placed around the farmstead equipped with removable covers to prevent evaporation and the propagation of mosquitoes. Spray equipment should be kept in good condition and filled with water at all times. Hoses and nozzles should be kept in good working order. A back pump might be worth its weight in gold if used promptly at the start of a fire.

Plows, disks, or other equipment that would be effective in making fire guards should be kept in readiness on every farm. They should be located so that they can be reached with a tractor or team without any loss of time. Moldboard plows should be equipped with sharp shares. Dull ones are not effective in dry, hard ground. They should be kept attached to the plow. As a matter of precaution, it would be well to pull a plow into a field along with the combine. Quick action with a plow will often save an entire field.

WOMEN’S AUXILIARY CREWS SUGGESTED

Fire fighters get hungry, and when fire endangers homes and property, it may not be possible to leave the fire for any length of time. Farm women within the areas served by each crew could contribute a real service by completing an organization that would assume responsibility for providing food for the persons unable to leave a fire.

COOPERATION MEANS SUCCESS

Fires of enemy origin or normal causes could destroy many rural communities in Oregon. The cooperation of all farm people in the prevention and control of fire during the emergency will permit Oregon’s agriculture to contribute its full share to the war effort and provide a substantial measure of security for the farm home and farm family.