



Wildfire protection costs increase

The Oregon Department of Forestry wants you to know why costs for wildfire protection are increasing. The Department protects nearly 16 million acres, mostly private lands, from wildfire. Across the Department's 13 forest protection districts, rising costs have made it necessary to increase the amount of the Forest Patrol Assessment. Here are the three main reasons:

- Increased local district costs** – Key to our efforts to control costs is a rapid response to fires by the local forest protection districts' personnel and equipment. They are very successful at this, extinguishing 94 percent or more of all fires at 10 acres or smaller. However, hotter, drier and longer fire seasons have pushed up costs. A long-term inflationary trend in equipment costs and labor rates has also contributed.
- Large wildfire funding system** – The last session of the Oregon Legislature enacted House Bill 3044A, raising Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund (OFLPF) rates. In addition to other funding increases, this measure raised the amount that owners of lots with improvements are required to pay. Because improved lots (those with homes or other structures) are more difficult to protect than pure forestland, a surcharge on these improvements, established in 1989, helps pay the higher costs of fighting wildfires around structures.
- Repayment of a \$5 million loan** – Over the past three fire seasons, the Department suppressed 14 large wildfires that cost more than a million dollars each to put out. During that same period, it cost an average of \$11.8 million per season to fight large wildfires. The OFLPF, a special fund that pays the costs of fighting the largest fires, was taking in only about \$8 million annually. In spring 2008, the State Treasury loaned \$5 million to the Fund to help offset this deficit. By law, a **one-time charge** to repay the loan must be included in this year's Forest Patrol Assessment rate.

~~Oregon's wildfire protection system is recognized as one of the best systems in the U.S. We realize these increases come at a time when every Oregonian is coping with a challenging economy. They are necessary to enable the Department to continue to provide you with the quality wildfire protection services to which you are accustomed. You can help reduce further increases by taking personal responsibility for fire prevention and by reducing the amount of vegetation near your home.~~

Example:

If your property is at or below the minimum acreage, it will be assessed \$15 (district assessment) plus the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund rates. Here is a comparison between the OFLPF rates for 2007 and 2008:

Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund Assessments

	2007	2008	2008 loan repayment	2008 revised total
Minimum lot assessment	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.75	\$ 1.89	\$ 5.64
Improved lot surcharge	\$38.00	\$47.50	\$23.97	<u>\$71.47</u>
			Total minimum lot OFLPF Assessment	\$77.11

If your property acreage is above the minimum lot size (varies by county and district), then your per-acre assessment will reflect the district's assessment rate plus the OFLPF rates. If your property has no improvements, the rates above are not applied, but a per-acre OFLPF rate does apply in addition to the district's assessment rate. The OFLPF acreage rates are:

	2007	2008	2008 loan repayment	Revised 2008 total
Timber assessment Western Oregon	\$0.04/acre	\$0.05/acre	\$0.025/acre	\$0.075/acre
Timber assessment Eastern Oregon	\$0.06/acre	\$0.075/acre	\$0.038/acre	\$0.113/acre

If your property is above the minimum lot size and has improvements, then your rate includes the district per-acre assessment rate, the OFLPF per-acre rate, and the improved lot surcharge from above.

Note: The total on your property tax statement is the sum of the district rates plus the OFLPF rates.

If you have questions, please contact your local Oregon Department of Forestry office for further explanation. Offices are listed in your phone book and on the Web, www.oregon.gov/ODF/offices.shtml.

**FOR INFORMATION REGARDING
THIS INCREASE CALL
541-276-3491 ATTN: DAVID**