

Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

Southwest Oregon

8/30/2017

Subject: Potential for extreme fire behavior with high potential for crown involvement, prolific spotting and rapid fire escalation due to extremely dry fuel conditions in Southwest Oregon.

Discussion: Recent fires have exhibited large crown runs, prolific spotting and rapid escalation of fire activity which have put firefighters at risk of entrapment. Current fuel conditions are highly susceptible to high intensity fire, crown involvement and prolific spotting. Long range spotting has been common. Burn scars from previous year's fires that were checking fire spread are now actively burning. Heavy fuels and duff are igniting readily requiring additional effort to secure control lines. Fires have rapidly escalated from small spot-fires to rapidly spreading crown fires.

Conditions across the area are expected to remain until significant moisture or consistent cool weather arrives.

Difference from normal conditions: There has been no precipitation at most RAWS for over 80 straight days. ERC values are above 90th percentile conditions and are commonly breaking records. Live fuel moisture is at critical dryness levels in both shrubs and timber. Heavy dead fuels, litter and duff are consuming readily and adding to fire intensity.

Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- High potential for crown involvement including large crown runs and cause rapid fire spread.
- Prolific spotting and long range spotting can easily cross control lines or overwhelm firefighters responding to spot-fires.
- Rapid escalation of fire behavior from surface fires to large crown runs can entrap firefighters or cut off escape routes.
- Rapid fire movement from combinations of crown runs and spotting back to crown runs can move fires several miles in short time periods.
- Both firefighters and the public may be exposed to large fire runs.

Mitigation Measures:

- Brief incoming resources about conditions, especially out of area resources.
- Increase emphasis of Lookouts, Communications, Escape Routes and Safety Zones.
- Ensure safety zones are large enough for crown fire conditions.
- Ensure lookouts can give ample warning to resources as fire activity increases.
- Use extra caution when responding to spot fires and ensure escape routes are established.
- Establish trigger points and constantly re-evaluate tactics/weather/fire behavior to ensure safety.
- Always be aware of the latest weather and fire danger information.

Area of Concern: Southwest Oregon.