Wildfire Resilience in Washington State

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House Technology, Economic Development, & Veterans Committee

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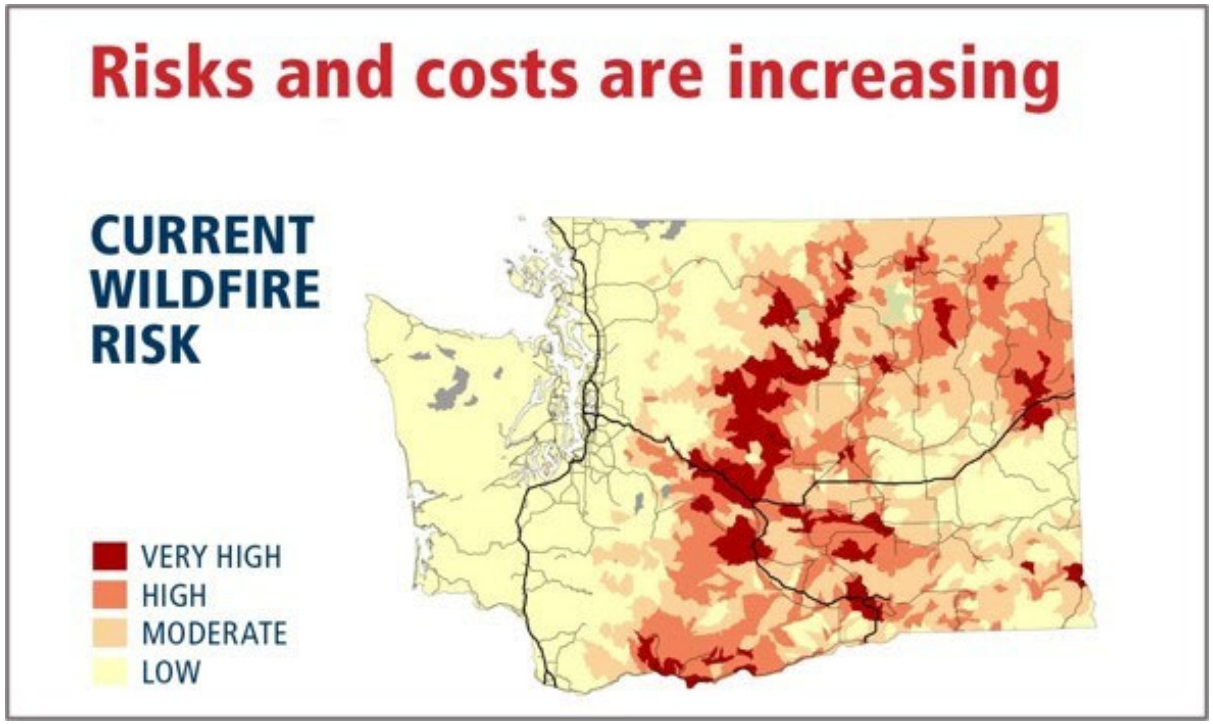
Fires in Washington State by the Numbers

- Between 2020 and 2025 **2.3 million Acres Burned**
- 34 FEMA Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) declarations supporting wildfire response.
- Largest fire in state history: Cold Spring/Pearl Hill, (Okanogan/Douglas County) 413,835k acres burned, 2020



What is Washington's Wildfire Risk

- 70% chance of a wildfire-related disaster dec **each year**
- Central WA has highest risk from **direct** wildfire impacts
- Frequency, extent, and severity of fires have **increased** in last 50 years
- Climate change, population growth, and urbanization are together **driving the increase** in wildfire risk for WA
- Wildfires are now WA's **most common** natural hazard event



State Agencies Roles



WA EMD Role in Fire Resilience



- Securing federal funding following disaster
- Advanced Planning through Hazard Mitigation Plans
- Coordination of mitigation funding through state agencies

OIC's role - Financial Resilience against wildfire peril

- Insurance is an important tool for financial resilience after a wildfire loss.

- Therefore, OIC focuses on ways to promote wildfire mitigation of the property.
    - Reduce the frequency and severity of claims lowers insurance costs for everyone.
    - Changing the perception of the risk makes it more likely insurance is available.

- The Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety conducts wildfire mitigation research.
    - Wildfire prepared homes standard is the best science available to mitigate a home against wind blown embers and wildfire.
    - The OIC promotes this system of wildfire mitigation to reduce the impacts of wildfire loss.

- After the loss, OIC assists in the recovery by setting minimum standards of conduct the insurer must follow to provide the benefits of the policy to the insured.

Energy Resilience and Emergency Management Office

Housed in Commerce's State Energy Office, we lead:

- Responsible for securing energy critical infrastructure against threats
- Wildfire preparedness, response and mitigation activities
- Emergency Response Planning and Operations
  - Support response to any energy supply disruption including public safety power shut-offs (PSPS)
  - Maintain energy sector response coordination plans, tools and capabilities
- Utility Wildfire Mitigation Program
  - Provide planning technical assistance for utility wildfire mitigation planning
  - Establish statewide wildfire mitigation program guidelines and resources for electric utilities
- Energy Resilience and Mitigation Technical Assistance
  - Provide local and tribal energy resilience planning
  - Support utilities on wildfire mitigation activities and grid resilience and hardening

Wildfire Readiness and Technology

George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor

Forest Resilience and Wildland Fire Management

January 30, 2026

Fire Season Preparedness

- Host pre-season readiness meetings with partners, regions and others; mitigate identified issues prior to the start of fire season
- Onboard seasonal firefighters; train new firefighters at Academy
- Conduct refresher training and work capacity testing to ensure firefighter readiness
- Prepare and stage logistics equipment; prep Camps crews
- Prepare and stage aviation, heavy equipment assets;
- ensure contracts for additional resources are in place (private, state)
- Conduct Weekly Readiness briefings for interested agencies, tribal nations, legislative staff, etc.
- Analyze weather and fuels that indicate potential for large, damaging wildfires
- Validate on-going Region Level readiness and initial attack (IA) capacity
- Participate in Pacific Northwest Coordinate Group meetings focused on predictive services, incident management teams, and state to state readiness
- Support prevention efforts through community events utilizing Smokey Bear, fire danger signage, burn banning information sharing, etc.
- Coordinate evacuation planning and resource readiness with Emergency Management and the Fire Service



DNR File Photos





Technology

Current Technology

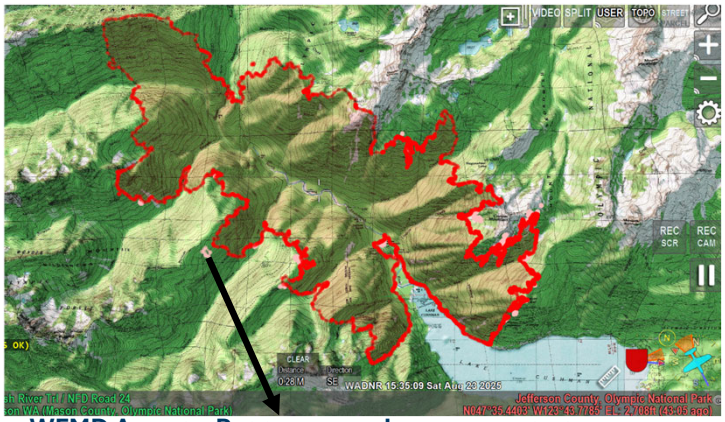
- Infrared, mapping, visuals and video on Multi-Mission aircraft (MMA) (*also supported flood response in December*)
- Pano AI Cameras for early detection, smoke and fire behavior monitoring, and location services
- Utilize Intterra satellite imagery and lightning detection to develop common operating picture (COP) for emergency response



Pano AI, Inc. file photo

Future Technology (funding dependent)

- Build out AI camera system; congruent with NOAA satellite data
- Satellite link to MMA for real time imaging and fire tracking
- Partner with universities to develop additional technology (e.g. detailed risk analysis and fuels treatment monitoring for fire effects)



WFMD Aviation Program file: Infrared image of fire perimeter, with heat showing outside the perimeter

Core components of fire – resilient communities

1) Fire-resistant built environments
2) Landscape-scale fuel management
3) Prepared and aware residents
4) Firefighting and response capabilities
5) Government-supported plans and initiatives

Tools that help promote fire resilience for homeowners

- Property risk assessments provided by local fire district staff
- Cost-share grants for defensible space and home-hardening actions
- Clear standards via WUI codes
- Affordable Ignition-resistant building materials
- Community awareness events

