



December 8, 2025  
The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

RE: OFCA Support for the Post-Wildfire Environmental Assistance Act

On behalf of the Oregon Fire Chiefs Association (OFCA), I am writing to express our strong support for the Post-Wildfire Environmental Assistance Act. This legislation expands the assistance to our communities by amending Section 420 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to authorize remediation and provide for debris removal and EPA assistance. The timely, federal support provided by this act is important to our members who represent the over 300 local and tribal fire departments and districts in the state.

While the acreage burned by wildfires has doubled over each of the last three decades, the impacts on Oregonians and our firefighters have increased at a greater rate. Over the last several years, we have had communities decimated by wildfire. Most recently, the Rowena Fire destroyed 56 homes. While the immediate impacts of loss of homes, landscapes, and income are felt as fire comes through an area, there are lasting impacts that could be mitigated early – decreasing impacts – with the infusion of timely, federal assistance.  
**Hazardous debris blocks safe firefighter access and slows recovery.**

In the wildland-urban interface, burned homes, vehicles, batteries, furnishings, and building materials create complex hazardous waste fields. Early surveying and removal of these hazardous materials is essential to restore access and protect responders and residents.

**Firefighter exposure to toxins at WUI incidents is real and preventable.**

When structures, vehicles, and personal belongings burn, responders face elevated exposure to toxins such as asbestos, metals (e.g., lead, arsenic), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and fine particulates. National evaluations and firefighter-focused research highlight increased near-field concentrations and dermal/respiratory pathways during WUI operations—conditions that persist during mop-up and debris handling. Earlier EPA engagement and coordinated hazardous material removal would reduce these exposures. [\[cdc.gov\]](https://www.cdc.gov), [\[nationalacademies.org\]](https://www.nationalacademies.org), [\[iaff.org\]](https://iaff.org)

**Protecting drinking and bathing water at fire stations and nearby systems.**

After wildfires, toxic contaminants can infiltrate distribution systems and private wells—especially where system pressure losses, heat damage, or plastic components are involved. Many Oregon fire stations rely on small municipal systems or onsite wells for drinking and shower facilities. Early remediation and disposal of hazardous materials will reduce the immediate and legacy toxic impacts in these water supplies. The Post-Wildfire Environmental Assistance Act is a practical, targeted solution that will improve access, reduce risk, and protect health. The Oregon Fire Chiefs Association respectfully urges swift passage of this act, and we stand ready to provide testimony or technical input as needed.

Thank you for your leadership on wildfire resilience and recovery.

Respectfully,

Devon Brown  
President

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# OREGON FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

*Serving Those Who Lead*

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