

This document provides important emergency response information and preparation/planning information for three types of fire:

- a house fire,
- a small (less than a few acres) slowly advancing ground fire, and
- a wildfire.

Information was gathered from local and regional fire and water professionals, and the document prepared by the water committee.

Summary

- The High Lostine fire hydrants give a false sense of security. They would be useful for a small ground fire, but not for a house fire (inadequate time to lay fire hose) or a wildfire (inadequate water storage).
- The High Lostine reservoir has sufficient storage to fight a house fire or a small slowly-advancing ground fire.
- For a wildfire, the High Lostine water system is an important – but limited in time – asset. Water should be used for wetting-down the perimeter of structures prior to arrival of the fire using special low-volume (1 gallon-per-minute) sprinkler heads to reduce the chance of structure ignition.
- Hardening of structures and creation of defensible space by reducing fuel load are the primary defenses for reducing the risk of structure loss from wildfire.

A. House fire. → Call the Lostine Fire Department (LFD, 541-569-2015) or 911.

- An owner(s) laying hose from a fire hydrant requires too much time. Instead, assess the situation and if you believe it is safe to do so, consider using quicker resources (a fire extinguisher or garden hose) to suppress or extinguish the fire.
- Time is critical because fire growth is exponential in the early stages of a fire. A fire start in a home can be expected to grow to room size or larger in 5-10 minutes, whereas the best case response time for LFD fire-fighters to arrive and get water on the fire is 25 minutes. Therefore, if an owner is unable to extinguish or arrest the fire before the LFD arrives, there is a good likelihood the house will be a total loss.
- While local fire departments will use on-board water, they may also use reservoir water. Water stored in the reservoir (at least 12,000 gallons fall through spring and at least 25,000 gallons summer) is typically adequate for addressing a house fire. A maximum of 15,000 to 18,000 gallons is typically needed for attack and mop-up of a single house fire. However, if a house fire is large enough that it isn't brought under control by fire-fighters with approximately 10,000 gallons, the house will be a total loss and it's just a matter of preventing fire spread to the forest or other structures.

B. Small slowly-advancing ground fire. → Call the Lostine Fire Department (541-569-2015) or 911.

- Assess the situation. When a ground fire is driven by wind, is moving quickly, occurs when fuels are very dry, or moves into the tree canopy, High Lostine volunteers should leave the response to fire professionals.
- If conditions merit, proceed with attention to changing conditions and maintaining personal safety. Prior to arrival of local fire departments, there may be adequate time for High Lostine volunteers to defend homes with garden hoses and/or (with guidance from a water committee member) lay hose from a fire hydrant(s). Fire barrels containing hose, splitters, and nozzles are positioned along Tamarack Road (3 locations) and Lostine River Road (one location). The barrels are locked – to open enter the combination 2-0-1-1 and then tightly compress the U-shaped hasp to the lock body and release.

C. Wildfire. → Call the Wallowa Unit Forester at (541) 886-2881 or 911. During non-business hours, call the Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch Center at (541) 963-7171 or 911. Information about a large wildfire is divided into 4 sub-topics.

1) The storage capacity of the HLOA water reservoir is limited.

Therefore, the best use of reservoir water is wetting-down the perimeter of structures prior to and/or during arrival of the fire/firebrands to reduce the chance of structure ignition. Per HLOA policy, each lot is limited to a total of 8

gallons/minute (for example, 8 sprinklers rated at 1 gallon/minute or four sprinklers rated at 2 gallons/minute). Only special low-volume (no more than 2.0 gallons/minute) sprinkler heads are allowed; this will provide a minimum of two hours of water application. Use of larger volume sprinklers disadvantages your neighbors and is counter-productive because the water supply will be depleted too far before arrival of fire/firebrands.

Notes: (a) The above water limits do not apply to owners that instead choose to utilize river water or fill personal multi-thousand gallon tank(s) prior to the start of fire season. (b) In unique situations, the Fire Committee may approve up to a total of 16 gallons/minute for a lot.

Plan and prepare for a wildfire by doing the following:

- Decide whether you will comply with the above sprinkler water limits –or– use river water or personal tanks –or– solely rely on equipment provided by fire-fighters (see topics 2 and 3 below).
- High Lostine owner Gary Willis (gwillis5050@gmail.com) is available to consult with you on equipment (type and number) to purchase and where to place sprinklers.
- When complying with the above water limits:
 - Deploy sprinklers and hoses at the start of fire season –or– (if time allows before evacuating) when a fire threatens.
 - If the fire threat is immediate and fire-fighting personnel have not arrived, turn sprinklers on.
 - If the response is being directed by fire managers and you are told to evacuate, do not turn the sprinklers on unless instructed to do so – this prevents premature depletion of the water supply. Sprinklers will be turned on by fire-fighting personnel at the appropriate time.

2) The pumping rate of the HLOA well is inadequate for fighting a wildfire.

An alternative and faster method for supplying the reservoir is being evaluated by the HLOA water committee. Never the less, in the majority of scenarios the primary source of water for attacking a wildfire will be equipment from fire-fighting departments and agencies. Water will be provided with structure engines (one engine per one to several houses deemed defensible), wildland engines/brush rigs (for attacking fire away from homes), and perhaps aircraft. Engines will be resupplied by water tenders and/or from sumps (temporary tanks). Tenders will be refilling from an improvised access to the river or from the lake at the Lostine River Ranch.

3) Fire-fighting response: primary and secondary defenses.

Fire-fighting response by local, regional, state, and/or federal governments should be recognized as a secondary and supplemental defense for reducing the risk of structure loss. The Wallowa County Wildfire Protection Plan, the Oregon Department of Forestry, and the National Firewise Program maintain that hardening of structures and creation of defensible space by reducing fuel load are the primary defenses for reducing the risk of structure loss and reducing the level of tree mortality.

Fire-fighter response is considered a secondary defense. Fire-fighter response to a property is not guaranteed to be timely and/or effective due to several interacting factors.

- Fire behavior and extent. Weather, fuel loading, and topography effect fire behavior. Fire behavior and/or extent may limit or even prevent ground-based delivery of water and the presence of fire-fighters.
- Resource availability. The ability to simultaneously defend structures at multiple locations in the High Lostine could be limited due to assignment of equipment or personnel to other areas of the county or region, or inadequate time for these resources to be mobilized to the High Lostine.
- Triage. Fire-fighters sometimes triage properties. Homes and lots with inadequate defensible space will be bypassed in favor of those that afford adequate defensible space and personal safety.

In addition, owners are notified that, for new construction, Wallowa County has adopted more stringent building code requirements (implemented through permitting) which strengthen the creation of defensible space and hardening of structures. These requirements supersede the current HLOA CC&Rs.

4) Lostine Canyon Firewise Community.

The High Lostine lies within the Lostine Canyon Firewise Community, northeast Oregon's first nationally recognized Firewise community. Participation by individual High Lostine owners in the Firewise Community is voluntary. The goals of a Firewise Community are to prevent, or reduce the probability of, catastrophic damage to structures and loss of life through owner education and engagement (www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/By-topic/Wildfire/Firewise-USA).

PDF's of the Community "Wildfire Risk Assessment" and Community "Action Plan" are available from Ron Polk (rpolk@vcu.edu) or the Lostine Canyon Firewise Community leader Mike Eng (mikeeng@mac.com). The documents contain useful information that can help HLOA landowners evaluate their home and property, allowing each owner to seek what they believe is an appropriate degree of defense against wildfire. Individual assessments of home and property by Gary Willis (gwillis5050@gmail.com) and the Oregon Department of Forestry (timothy.j.cudmore@oregon.gov), respectively, are available to HLOA landowners.