As Deputy Chief/Fire Marshal, I am passionate about addressing wildfire hazard zones that pose a significant risk in the Rogue Valley. In September 2016, Medford Fire-Rescue submitted an Oregon Residential Specialty Code (ORSC) amendment to the Wildfire Hazard Mitigation section (R324). I testified before the Code Review Committee (CRC) on February 8, 2017 regarding the need for new homes to be built more ignition resistant in wildfire hazard zones. A workgroup was formed and a draft appendix was developed after recommendation from the CRC. Appendix W was submitted to the CRC and testimony was given on April 5, 2017. After hearing the testimonies, the Code Review Committee voted 6-1 to recommend moving Appendix W forward. In both testimonies, the following information was communicated:

- There is a need for such a code amendment to protect communities and firefighters. Conflagrations pose both a serious life-safety risk to residents and first responders as well as destroy property. An example is the 2010 Ashland fire that consumed 11 houses within 45 minutes, and ultimately took the life of Medford’s Fire Battalion Chief, Mark Burns. During the incident, as conditions were changing rapidly, he moved his command post several times in an attempt to avoid smoke, keep the fire in view, and place firefighters and equipment in key positions. People were evacuated from their homes as the fire quickly spread from house to house. Chief Burns suffered irreparable damage to his lungs that day from severe smoke inhalation during the firestorm and never returned to full duty status again.

- Wildfires pose a very real threat each year to many communities in Oregon. In 2014, the Boles Fire in Weed California just 49 miles south of the Oregon/California state line, rapidly burned through 516 acres, destroying 157 homes. The Canyon Creek Fire of 2015 in northern Oregon burned 110,261 acres, destroying 43 homes and 50 other structures. A total of 685,809 acres burned in Oregon in 2015 as a result of 2,588 fires which cost nearly $95M in emergency operations efforts.

- Fire officials desire a higher standard in construction techniques and materials that minimize ignition risk. We need to build responsibly, taking advantage of tested materials and assemblies that lessen the home-ignition potential. The average homeowner trusts that building codes and home builders have taken adequate measures to mitigate hazards.

- Mitigation requirements currently exist for flooding, freezing, earthquakes, severe winds, snow loading, etc. in the ORSC, yet no significant measures to protect homes from wildfire threats. The solution to reduce risk posed by wildfire is multifaceted, with ignition-resistant construction techniques being one of the necessary components.

- The proposed code amendment is modeled after the California Building Code Chapter 7A. The Oakland Hills, California fire killed 25 people and destroyed more than 3,500 homes. As a result, California developed construction requirements for structures in wildland urban interface areas, and led the country in testing of materials and assemblies for use in these areas. Oregon needs to consider similar measures to reduce the risk as more homes are being built in areas subject to wildfires. Preventing ignition to these structures will reduce potential loss of life, injury, and catastrophic home losses. More ignition resistant homes will allow firefighting resources to become more effective, optimizing the deployment of personnel and apparatus during wildfires.

We are hopeful the draft appendix will be supported for the following reasons:

1. Allow jurisdictions to designate hazardous wildfire areas.
2. Establish minimum requirements, safeguard general welfare and safety for firefighters and emergency responders during emergency operations.
3. Code consistency across the state.
4. Standardize tests and a path for acceptance of new materials that meet the standardized testing.

On May 10, 2017, I testified in front of the Oregon Residential and Manufacturers Structures Board along with other supporters. There was no testimony in opposition and there were comments from the Board that wildfire mitigation construction standards were long overdue in Oregon wildfire threat areas. One homebuilder on the Board who is also a leader in a Homebuilders Association, stated the Association is supportive of the standards, and grateful to be part of the process. The Board unanimously approved the CRC’s recommendation to move the 2017 ORSC forward, including Appendix W. Despite the widespread support, fire officials were very disap-
Portable Heater Safety—Deputy Chief Greg Kleinberg

Portable heaters are annually responsible for over 60,000 home fires in the United States, which cause nearly 700 deaths, more than 1,500 injuries, and over $900M in property damage. If you choose to use a portable heater, consider the following safety measures:

- Keep heaters a minimum of 36” away from combustibles
- Plug unit directly into a wall outlet. Do not use an extension cord
- Use only heaters with built-in high temperature and tip-over shutoff features
- Do not use unvented fuel-fired heaters indoors
- Do not hang combustible items to dry over a heater
- Turn off portable heaters when family members are sleeping or leave the house
- Keep heaters out of high traffic areas and exit paths

Do you have a private bridge that leads into your property? For safety purposes, emergency responders may be reluctant to drive heavy vehicles across a private bridge without knowing the bridge’s capacity or condition. If responders decide not to cross a bridge, they will make every effort to reach the location, including carrying heavy medical equipment or stretching hose for extended distances. This will result in a critical delay in providing assistance and increase the potential for property damage and serious injury.

The Fire Department recommends that every bridge be inspected by a qualified engineer once every five years. The evaluation helps determine the current load rating based on the condition of the bridge. Some bridges may have original design documents on file. However, conditions can change over time due to erosion of supports, and deterioration of beams and decking materials. While a bridge may support daily vehicles crossing with weights of 5,000 - 10,000 pounds, the bridge may fail when heavier vehicles such as fire engines or water tenders attempt to cross (one axle alone may weigh over 30,000 pounds).

Jackson County requires new bridges to have a minimum 12 foot wide driving surface and be capable of supporting 50,000 pounds. The bridge design should provide the ability to carry an occasional fire vehicle weighing 60,000 pounds. Vehicle load limits (weight limit capacity) shall be posted at both entrances (both directions) to the private bridge.

(References: JC Development Ordinance 9.5.5 section A (11) and Oregon Fire Code sections 503.2.6, D102.1)
Deputy Fire Marshal Ralph Sartain recently announced that he accepted the position of Fire Marshal at Ashland Fire Rescue.

Ralph came to the City of Medford in January 2000 where he worked as a Police Officer for 10 years. In October 2010 he applied for Fire Inspector II at Medford Fire-Rescue (MFR). While working for MFR, he achieved Fire Inspector III and Deputy Fire Marshal III. His last day with the City was September 5, 2017. Congratulations and our best to you Fire Ralph Sartain

Changing your clock on November 11, 2017?
That’s a reminder to
CHANGE YOUR SMOKE ALARM

Over the past two years, MRFPD2’s Board of directors worked closely with the Fire Department to secure a Wildland Officer to inspect and develop the wildland mapping program. The process resulted in a plan that is beneficial to both the City and the District. Medford Fire-Rescue will hire a Deputy Fire Marshal (DFM) this December, funded through a City/District partnership with each partner making equal contributions. The added position will specialize in wildland fire hazard mitigation efforts, one of the greatest disaster threats we face every year. Other responsibilities will include inspections, mapping hazard areas and working with homeowners to reduce wildfire risks. The DFM will also establish strategic rural firefighting water supply locations and identify rural hazardous private bridg-