

COGGLEVATION

OCTOBER 2017 | THE LIFE AND TIMES OF PF&R'S STRATEGIC PLAN | WWW.PORTLANDOREGON.GOV/FIRE/COGGLE

MOBILIZED

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

This year has seen a record number of wildland deployments for PF&R



Greetings from the Gorge: The crew and ladder truck that helped save Multnomah Falls Lodge.

"I always speak in a very measured way, and I tried to that night, but my wife could tell that I was worried," Captain Phil Dearixon said. Phil is describing a phone call with his wife that took place while he was fighting the Eagle Creek Fire as part of Task Force 40.

Combating a wildland fire in the Gorge, an area so meaningful to so many, is certainly cause for concern, but Phil's issue was a bit more complicated: he lives in Corbett and his home was potentially at risk. While he was in the thick of it with his crew, his wife was at home wondering if she should evacuate. "Truthfully, it was the fastest I've seen a fire move in a long time," he says. "But I tried to keep her and my daughter calm. I told them to go outside and if you see a glow in the sky, leave."

This summer and heading into the fall saw a record number of mobilizations where Portland Fire & Rescue crews and apparatus were called to duty at fires across the state. One member was called up via a federal request to help hurricane-affected areas in Florida and Puerto Rico with medical outreach. Additionally, three Portland Fire & Rescue engines and a chief officer were deployed to combat the deadly wildland fires in Northern California that took many lives and swallowed entire neighborhoods. "I appreciate how Portland Fire always steps up to the plate when needed," said State Fire Marshal Jim Walker. "It's also a great comfort to know that you always respond quickly and in a professional manner."

The issue of wildfires hit close to home for Portlanders when the Gorge was threatened: ash and smoke seeped into the city while locals worried about their favorite natural area. When Portland Fire & Rescue arrived at Multnomah Falls, crews brought something you don't usually see at a wildland fire: an aerial apparatus. Truck 3's aerial was used to stream water to protect Multnomah Falls Lodge's roof and the surrounding area and was a key element of the large team effort that helped save the lodge. Crews initially arrived at the

Gorge as a 20-hour deployment that was part of the bureau's mutual aid agreement with Hood River/Cascade Locks. Eventually the Governor declared a conflagration, triggering task forces and strike teams from across the state to descend upon the Gorge.

"I'm super proud of how our people performed this year," said Emergency Operations Division Chief Tom Williams. "They were working 16 hour days, sleeping in tents and getting up the next day and doing it all over again." The work PF&R does in these operations is a true team effort because for all those who are called to serve, others need to cover for them here in Portland.

Lieutenant Rob Root, who worked the Eagle Creek fire and staffs Bureau Headquarters (BHQ), knows that intimately. "There's no division in the organization that didn't feel the impact," he told Cogglevation from the BHQ office. "But we always find a way to make it work." He nodded at Jason Kelly across the room, the captain at BHQ who wasn't deployed, but handled all the resulting staffing needs. "Jason deserves all the kudos." Jason, for his part, was on phone call after phone call handling staffing requests during Cogglevation's visit.

According to Chief Williams, our work on these deployments are important on a few different levels. "We think it's our duty to respond when areas need our help," he says. "But these deployments also offer great incident training for our people and helps us bring home important field experience."

As for Phil Dearixon, he did learn some new things: he wrapped a house to protect it from fire, something he had never done before, and he knows if he's on duty, his family can handle an emergency without him. His family did eventually evacuate. Was he worried? "I had confidence that crews would protect our house, just like other people had put faith in us that we would protect their homes," he says.

DEPLOYMENT DIARIES



Captain Chris Barney leading a team meeting at the Milli fire.



Captain Phil Dearixon's team, Task Force 40, at the Eagle Creek fire.



PF&R firefighters in California with the Multnomah County Strike Team.



Lieutenant Rich Chatman (center) on a Black Hawk helicopter in Puerto Rico with the Disaster Medical Assistance Team.

OREGON DEPLOYMENT BY THE NUMBERS

Portland Fire Incident Management Team members:

Nena Springs: 6

Milli: 5

Chetco Bar: 10

Eagle Creek: 6

Portland Fire apparatus mobilized:

Nena Springs: 6 apparatus as part of 2 task forces

Chetco Bar: 2 apparatus as part of 1 task force

Eagle Creek: 9 apparatus as part of 3 task forces



Do you have a story about a PF&R cogglevation that would be great for this newsletter?

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