



Association of
Oregon Counties

Testimony to the House Veterans & Emergency Preparedness Committee

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee, My name is Steve Shaffer. I'm the Gilliam County Judge and also co-chair of the Association of Oregon Counties Public Safety Subcommittee on Resilience.

Over the past year, our association through the leadership of now past president and Umatilla County Commissioner Larry Givens prioritized county resilience. We focused our conferences and trainings on this topic, created emergency resource guides for our 120 county commissioners, created the resilience subcommittee that will work over the next year to discuss important emergency preparedness issues, and also created the Sister County program to promote mutual aid agreements between counties so they can assist each other during disasters.

This last summer a wildfire burned 65,000 acres in Gilliam County. Volunteer firefighters from 6 counties helped the county volunteers distinguish the fire. Mutual aid agreements allow for these counties to be there for 48 hours. Coordinating a 6-8 day fire can be difficult at best for our Emergency Managers.

Increased coordination and communication among counties will be a key component in a successful emergency preparedness model. Increased training for elected officials is also key. Last year at our annual conference, we were pleased to have both Colonel Flick and Jenny Demaris who you will hear from in just a moment, provide some basic incident command system training to many current and newly elected county commissioners.

Our Sister County Program has paired together approximately eight counties around the state with intergovernmental agreements to assist each other with resources. One recent success story is Umatilla County sending resources to Tillamook County during a recent flood. We also had numerous counties assisting with Grant County wildfires a few years ago.

We appreciate the strong partnership we have with our county emergency managers and the Oregon Emergency Management Association. The support that the state office of emergency management and Mike Harryman in the Governor's Office provide is also invaluable, especially for small counties with limited resources.

As this legislative session progresses, we look forward in ways that our counties can continue to partner with the state in order to make sure that we all remain resilient. Thank you very much.

400 Thompson Living
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