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New Safety Standards for BLM and Partner Organizations' Fire Response

Portland, Ore. – New standards for training, equipment and communication established this week will enhance the safety and efficiency of the partnership between the Bureau of Land Management and Oregon's Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs). The intent is to ensure a cohesive, safe and efficient response when firefighters from RFPAs are working alongside state and Federal employees.

"The RFPAs are an important element in initial response to wildfire starts on more than 13 million acres managed by the BLM in eastern Oregon," said acting Oregon/Washington State Director Ron Dunton. "The BLM is committed to strengthening our local partnerships," continued Dunton.

The RFPAs are comprised primarily of ranchers in an area who have come together to respond to wildfires. Given the size and remoteness of many Western rangelands, local RFPAs are often the first to respond to a fire start, gaining valuable time until BLM crews arrive. Cooperation among these groups and the BLM, in Oregon as elsewhere, has been improving in recent years.

The new standards, which set minimum age and training requirements as well as communication protocols and personal protective gear needs, also designate the Incident Command System as the management structure that will be used. All elements of the standards are designed to enhance the safety of all firefighters at an incident and facilitate efficient operations.

"This summer, the communication, collaboration and cooperation has been phenomenal between the agencies and the RFPAs," said Marvin Vetter, ODF rangeland fire protection coordinator. "The interactions have all been great." Vetter said after a recent lightning storm in Baker County. The RFPAs responded on initial attack to 15 lightning fires along with the State of Oregon Department of Forestry, BLM, and U.S. Forest Service firefighters, and everything went smoothly. Similarly the Juntura RFPA responded to the 24,000-acre Juntura Complex of fires on the BLM Vale District, providing much-needed resources and support.

A copy of the RFPA guidance is available online at: www.blm.gov/or/resources/fire

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The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. In Fiscal Year 2015, the BLM generated \$4.1 billion in receipts from activities occurring on public lands.

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