



## Central Washington 2012 Wildfires Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Information Brief – October 10, 2012

BAER Information: (208) 398-3348

### Preparing for Rain Storms

Wenatchee, WA (October 10, 2012) – The recent wildfires on the **Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest** changed the watersheds within the burned areas and increased the potential for flooding and mudflows that could impact several communities, homes, and other infrastructures adjacent to and downstream from the National Forest.

Although flooding can be a frequent occurrence after a wildfire, the extent of the effects of the recent wildfires on the watersheds needs to be determined and analyzed.

**Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Supervisor Becki Heath** assembled a **Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)** team to assess the condition of the areas that burned in the recent wildfires.

One of the most effective **BAER** strategies is interagency coordination with local cooperators who assist affected businesses, homes, and landowners prepare for rain events. The **Forest Service**, **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**, and the **Bureau of Land Management (BLM)** work together and coordinate with local agencies and counties that assist landowners in preparing for potential run-off.

Federal assistance to private landowners is the primary responsibility of the **NRCS** through the **Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program** (<http://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp.html>). This week **NRCS** will be conducting damage survey reports for the private land adjacent and downstream from the burned areas. **NRCS** will utilize these reports to develop emergency measures to reduce the impacts from potential increased water and mud flows. **Chelan County** is sponsoring an **EWP** grant and will be working with the **NRCS** to assist private landowners with the damage survey reports and recommended emergency measures ([http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1045263.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1045263.pdf)).

Multiple agencies are working with the **BAER** team and looking at the full scope and scale of the situation to reduce the potential threats to life and property; however, **BAER** treatments cannot prevent all of the potential flooding or soil erosion impacts, especially after wildfires change the landscape.

#### **It is important that residents take steps to protect themselves and their property from flooding and mudflows:**

- For their **safety**, communities need to monitor local weather reports and public safety bulletins, local road closures, emergency notifications, weather alerts, follow local county and city advisories, and act accordingly.
- Use a “weather radio” or smart phone “weather app” that monitors “all hazards” alerts issued by the **NOAA-National Weather Service** (<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/>).
- Prepare for rainstorms by being prepared to evacuate if emergency county or city officials determine that flooding and mudflows are expected which could pose an increased threat to life and property.

- Know and be alert to environmental signs of dangerous weather conditions and be prepared to take action that can save lives.
- Understand that all canyons along the Cascade Range and those associated within the burned areas can produce flooding.
- If you find yourself in a flood, climb to safety (seek higher ground).

### **Additional Resources for Preparing for Flood-Mudflows and Interagency Cooperator Information:**

The **State of Washington - Department of Ecology** coordinates its **Flood Plain Management** program with the **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** and local governments to address statewide flood hazard challenges and provides grants and technical assistance to local communities to reduce impacts to life and property, and protect environmental functions of flood hazard areas (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/floods/index.html>).

The **Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012**, signed into law on July 6, 2012 by President Obama, increases access to the **National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)** for some residents whose homes could be impacted by flooding from federal land that resulted from wildfires. This law may allow residents in these impacted communities eligible for an exception from the 30-day waiting period usually required for flood insurance coverage. Additional information about **NFIP** is available through **FEMA** at <http://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program>, or **Flood Smart** at [http://www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/?cid=Search\\_Google\\_Adwords\\_FEMA\\_Brand](http://www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/?cid=Search_Google_Adwords_FEMA_Brand).

The **State of Washington - Department of Health** provides information about how the public can prepare and what to do afterwards for floods, landslides, and mudflows:

- <http://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/EmergencyPreparednessandResponse/Factsheets/Floods.aspx>
- <http://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/EmergencyPreparednessandResponse/Factsheets/LandslidesandMudflows.aspx>.

The **Emergency Management Division** of the **Washington State Military Department** provides information about floods and landslides:

- <http://www.emd.wa.gov/hazards/documents/ERG-37Floods.pdf>
- [http://www.emd.wa.gov/preparedness/prep\\_floodsafe.shtml](http://www.emd.wa.gov/preparedness/prep_floodsafe.shtml)
- [http://www.emd.wa.gov/hazards/haz\\_landslides.shtml](http://www.emd.wa.gov/hazards/haz_landslides.shtml)

The **USDI Geological Survey (USGS)** provides “water watch” internet tools and flood information for the **State of Washington**:

- [http://wa.water.usgs.gov/water\\_issues/flood.htm](http://wa.water.usgs.gov/water_issues/flood.htm)
- [http://waterwatch.usgs.gov/?state=wa&map\\_type=flood&web\\_type=map](http://waterwatch.usgs.gov/?state=wa&map_type=flood&web_type=map)
- <http://waterwatch.usgs.gov/index.php?r=wa&id=real>

The **Chelan County Sheriff’s Office – Department of Emergency Services** provides community preparedness information for a variety of topics: <http://chelandem.org/preparedness.htm>.

The **NRCS** is coordinating a workshop with **Washington State University** that will be held before the end of October that will give private landowners and business owners more information regarding what actions they can take to protect themselves and their property. Additional information for that workshop will be shared with the public when the date and location is determined.

Central Washington BAER Team information is available at <http://inciweb.org/incident/3292/>.  
Also, follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/OkaWenNF>.

