

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND FORESTRY

2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard

Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4912

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 28, 2017

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Michelle Finch-Walker, 580-236-1021, michelle.finch@ag.ok.gov

Oklahoma Forestry Services' wildfire training for fire departments pays off in recent fires

For the past three years, Oklahoma Forestry Services, in cooperation with Oklahoma State University - Fire Service Training, has provided wildland firefighting training to fire departments across the state. This training prepares firefighters, who may be more accustomed to fighting structure fires, to safely and efficiently conduct initial attack on wildfire incidents. While Oklahoma Forestry Services is the lead agency for wildfire suppression in the state, it is local fire departments that are the first line of defense in their communities and will likely be first to respond to any wildland fire in their area.

This training paid off in a big way last week when the Washington County Fire Department fought the Hoppick Fire, a large wildfire that threatened multiple structures near Bartlesville. The fire was well established when Washington County Fire arrived on scene. The abundance of dry fine fuels, high temperatures, low humidity and windy conditions meant the Hoppick Fire could go big. Applying the tactics they learned in the Oklahoma Forestry Services training, Washington County Fire Department crews were able to prevent the loss of homes and hold the fire at 544 acres.

The Washington County Fire Department has completed multiple wildland fire training classes but credits the G-130 Wildland Training for Structural Firefighters as especially beneficial in last week's fire. The G-130 class addresses wildland firefighting in a variety of vegetation and terrain models. By delivering information on different fire environments, firefighters learn to adapt their tactics to the conditions they may encounter.

"The training our department received from Oklahoma Forestry Services greatly contributed to our ability to make good decisions on initial attack at the Hoppick Fire," said Washington County Fire Chief Kary Cox. "As a result, we had a better understanding of how the fire would behave and that helped us to tailor our tactics on the fire. I would recommend advanced wildland fire training for all rural firefighters in Oklahoma."

Oklahoma Forestry Services will continue providing the G-130 training, as well as the more advanced G-131 - Wildland Training (Firefighter 1) for Structural Firefighters and G-231 Wildland Training for Structural Firefighters (Engine Boss) at no cost to local firefighters. OFS is committed to providing training and tools that will help Oklahoma firefighters to do their jobs safely while providing the highest level of protection possible for the people they serve.

"Our local fire departments do an outstanding job of protecting lives and property in their communities," said Mark Goeller, fire management chief for Oklahoma Forestry Services of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. "We want to provide them with knowledge that is specific to wildland fire, which is different from structural firefighting, so they are equipped to get control of wildfires before they spread into large fires. It is gratifying to see that our training is making a difference."

The OFS trainings are primarily delivered at the Oklahoma State University - Fire Service Training Regional Fire Schools (OSU-FST). Task force members interested in receiving these trainings can enroll on the OSU-FST website at www.osufst.org.

Oklahoma Forestry Services is the state's lead agency related to wildland fire prevention and protection. For additional information about wildfires, visit www.forestry.ok.gov/wildfire-information.

About Oklahoma Forestry Services

Oklahoma Forestry Services, a division of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, is committed to conserving, enhancing and protecting Oklahoma's 12.5 million acres of forests and woodlands. Since 1925, Oklahoma Forestry Services has worked with individuals and communities throughout the state to create resilient landscapes, fire-adaptive communities and provide wildfire response. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the division also has regional offices in Broken Bow, Wilburton and Tahlequah. For more information, visit <http://www.forestry.ok.gov>.

###

Photo Captions:

(Hoppick Fire Image)

Red slurry coats a Washington County Fire Department Brush Truck after retardant drops were used by aircraft to slow advance of the Hoppick Fire.



(Hoppick Truck Image)

A Washington County Emergency Management employee captures a photo as a Type 1 Heavy Helicopter drops water to protect homes threatened by the Hoppick Fire.

