

## Rain and Wildfire

Does rain help the firefighting efforts? The answer is a definite MAYBE.

The rain slows the fire spread and lowers intensity (flame length) allowing firefighters to directly attack the fire front. This is particularly important in the lower elevations where the grass and sage are the primary fuels for the fires. The fine fuels absorb moisture much more rapidly but also dry much faster.

At higher elevations in heavy forested areas much of this rain is intercepted by the tree canopy and may never reach the forest floor but greatly causes the relative humidity. This means a couple days of low intensity fire behavior and may delay planned burnout operations critical to containment efforts. Once the conditions change to warmer and drier conditions firing operations may return.

Rain exposes firefighters to additional safety hazards due to slick walking conditions and roads. Heavy rains may even cause minor landslides and flooding. Many times aviation resources have to be grounded due to low cloud cover and safety concerns.

The "most" favorable precipitation for firefighters is a week of steady soaking rain or snow. This is called a "season ending" event. It's arrival ends fire season for the year.

The rain that the Chiwaukum Complex is experiencing now is NOT a season ending event. We are still a good two months or more away from that "event".

So please, be vigilant with the possibility of new fire starts. We are a long way from the end of fire season and firefighters could use a break from new starts.