

NEWS RELEASE

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGY AND MINERAL INDUSTRIES
Dr. Vicki S. McConnell, State Geologist

800 NE Oregon Street #28, Suite 965, Portland, OR 97232
(503) 731-4100 FAX (503) 731-4066
WEB: <http://www.oregongeology.com>

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Contact: James Roddey 503-731-4100 x242 or (503) 807-8343

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Debris Flow Warning issued

The Oregon Department of Forestry website for official warnings can be found at:

<http://egov.oregon.gov/ODF/FIRE/debris.shtml>

The official statement from the National Weather Service can be found at:

<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/get.php?pil=SPS&sid=PQR&version=0>

Portland, Oregon: THE STATE OF OREGON HAS ISSUED A DEBRIS FLOW WARNING FOR CLATSOP, COLUMBIA, TILLAMOOK COUNTIES AND WESTERN YAMHILL AND WESTERN WASHINGTON COUNTIES DUE TO EXPECTED SOIL AND RAINFALL CONDITIONS. THE WARNING MEANS THAT INTENSE RAINFALL, WHICH MAY INITIATE DEBRIS FLOWS, IS EXPECTED BETWEEN NOW AND TUESDAY NOV 7 AT 6 AM.

Care should be taken when traveling over the mountains during this time. The most dangerous places include:

- Canyon bottoms, stream channels, and areas of rock and soil accumulation at the outlets of canyons.
- Bases of steep hillsides.
- Road cuts or other areas where slopes of hills have been excavated or over steepened.
- Places where slides or debris flows have occurred in the past.

Debris flows are a particular type of landslide: the dangerous, rapidly moving landslides that have been responsible for several deaths in Oregon in the past few years. In 1996, a series of debris flows resulted in the deaths of five people and damage to many homes, roads, and bridges. A debris flow near Florence in 1999 killed two loggers.

“Debris flows are rapidly moving landslides that can destroy everything in their paths,” said James Roddey, Earth Science Information Officer for the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI). “They can easily travel a mile or more, depending on the terrain. They’ll contain boulders and logs and transport those in a fast-moving soil and water slurry.”

The WARNING is issued when a potentially dangerous amount of intense rainfall is forecast for a specific area.

“People want to know what they should do when they hear about a landslide warning,” said Roddey. “Some areas are more hazardous than others when the danger of landslides is high. People know that if there’s a flood warning, they should stay away from the river. We also want them to start thinking about staying away from steep slopes during intense rainstorms. Knowing ahead of time where the danger areas around your home for potential landslides might be is the first step in being prepared,” explains Roddey.

He recommends several steps:

- Stay alert. Listen to the radio, TV, or a weather radio for warnings, and if told to evacuate, do so immediately.

- Listen for unusual sounds that might indicate moving debris, such as trees cracking or boulders knocking together. A trickle of falling mud or debris may precede larger landslides.
- If you think there is danger of a landslide, leave immediately.
- If water in a river or stream suddenly turns muddy or the amount of water flowing suddenly decreases or increases, this is a warning that the flow has been affected upstream. You should immediately leave the area because a debris flow may soon be coming downstream.
- Assume highways are not safe. Be alert when driving, especially at night. Don't overdrive your headlights. Embankments along roadsides may fail, sending rock and debris onto the road.
- Landowners and road managers should check road drainage systems and conduct needed maintenance in case the predicted heavy precipitation does occur.

Cleaning up after landslides can also be hazardous. “When it’s this wet outside, people need to be careful when they’re cleaning up the mess. A small mudslide can actually be part of a larger landslide,” explains Roddey. “Cleanup should not be done until after the storm.”

More information on debris flow warnings can be found online at:
<http://www.OregonGeology.com>

The Oregon Department of Forestry website for official warnings can be found at:
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The Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries is an independent agency of the State, and has a broad responsibility in developing a geologic understanding of natural hazards. We then make this information available to communities and individuals to help reduce the risks from earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, floods and volcanic eruptions. We assist in the formulation of state policy where understanding of geologic materials, geologic resources, processes, and hazards are key to decision-making. The Department is also the lead state regulatory agency for mining, oil, gas and geothermal exploration, production and reclamation.

For more information on upcoming events and current projects, contact James Roddey at 800 NE Oregon St., Portland, OR 97232, (503) 731-4100, ext. 242 or on cell phone at (503) 807-8343.

DOGAMI field offices can be contacted at: 1510 Campbell St., Baker City, (541) 523-3133; 5375 Monument Drive, Grants Pass, (541) 476-2496; and the Mined Land Regulation and Reclamation Program, 229 Broadalbin St. SW, Albany, (541) 967-2039.

Learn more about Oregon's geology by going online at:

<http://www.oregongeology.com>

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