

# OREGON DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGY AND MINERAL INDUSTRIES

Vicki S. McConnell, State Geologist

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **POTENTIAL DANGER OF DEBRIS FLOWS ISSUED FOR LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN, NORTH OREGON COAST AND NORTH OREGON CASCADES**

**The official statement from the National Weather Service can be found at: <http://www.weather.gov/alerts/or.html>**

**THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IN PORTLAND HAS HIGHLIGHTED THE POTENTIAL FOR DEBRIS FLOWS AND LANDSLIDES AS PART OF THE FLOOD WATCH FOR THE COAST RANGE OF NORTHWEST OREGON, LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN, NORTH OREGON COAST, NORTH OREGON CASCADES AND SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON.**

**IN WESTERN OREGON AND WASHINGTON, THIS INCLUDES THE CITIES OF ASTORIA, CANNON BEACH, TILLAMOOK, VERNONIA, JEWELL, TRASK, ST. HELENS, CLATSKANIE, FRANCES, RYDERWOOD, RAYMOND, LONG BEACH, CATHLAMET, LONGVIEW, KELSO AND CASTLE ROCK.**

**IN THE NORTH CASCADES, AREAS OF MOST CONCERN ARE THE RECENT BURN AREA NEAR MT HOOD. FLOODING AND DEBRIS FLOWS ARE POSSIBLE IN SEVERAL CREEKS DRAINING THE GNARL RIDGE BURN AREA. CREEKS OF MOST CONCERN ARE POALLIE CREEK, TILLY JANE CREEK, ELLIOT CREEK AND NEWTON CREEK. MINOR DEBRIS FLOWS HAVE OCCURRED IN LIGHTER RAINFALL EVENTS EARLIER THIS FALL.**

**DEBRIS FLOWS ARE DANGEROUS RAPIDLY MOVING LANDSLIDES. STEEP SLOPES, CANYONS, GORGES AND THE MOUTHS OF MOUNTAIN STREAMS ARE THE LOCATIONS AT GREATEST RISK. PERSONS WHO LIVE OR MAY TRAVEL THROUGH THESE LOCATIONS SHOULD BE ALERT TO THE POSSIBILITY OF DEBRIS FLOWS DURING OR SHORTLY AFTER PERIODS OF INTENSE RAINFALL.**

Care should be taken when traveling over the mountains during this time. The

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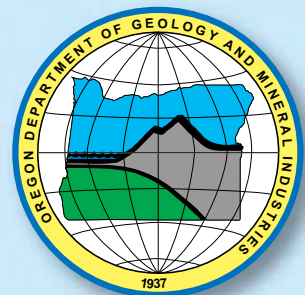
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most dangerous places include:

- 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 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.”

“People want to know what they should do when they hear about the potential for debris flows and landslides,” 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.

Roddey recommends several steps:

- Stay alert. Listen to the radio, TV, or a weather radio for flood watches, which include the potential for debris flows. 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.”

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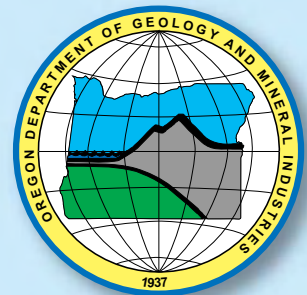
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The Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries is an independent agency of the State, and has a broad responsibility in developing a geologic understanding of natural hazards. We then make this information available to communities and individuals to help reduce the risks from earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, floods and volcanic eruptions. We assist in the formulation of state policy where an 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.

Learn more about Oregon's geology by going online at:  
<http://www.oregongeology.org>

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