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Press Release Immediate dissemination

On October 19, 2022, at about 4:50pm, the Grant County Dispatch Center began receiving 911 calls reporting an out of control USFS prescribed burn near mile post 2 on the Izee Highway in Bear Valley, Grant County, Oregon.

Grant County Sheriff Todd McKinley responded to the scene and found that a USFS prescribed burn had gotten out of control, crossed the Izee Highway, and was burning the private property of the Holliday Ranch.

Sheriff McKinley's initial investigation led him to believe that he had probable cause to arrest the USFS fire boss, Rick Snodgrass for Reckless Burning. "A person commits the crime of reckless burning [a class A misdemeanor] if the person recklessly damages property of another by fire or explosion." ORS 164.335. "Recklessly" means that a person is aware of and consciously disregards a substantial and unjustifiable risk that the result will occur or that the circumstance exists. ORS 161.085(9). The risk must be of such nature and degree that disregard thereof constitutes a gross deviation from the standard of care that a reasonable person would observe in the situation. *Id.*

Snodgrass was arrested and transported to the Grant County Jail, where he met release criteria and was conditionally released.

Investigation into the matter is continuing. Once the investigation is complete, investigation materials will be submitted to the Grant County District Attorney, who will then make a formal charging decision. While the investigation is ongoing, records will generally not be released per ORS 192.345(3).

Per DA Carpenter, "This case will be evaluated once the investigation is complete, and if appropriate, Snodgrass will formally be charged. These cases rarely have a bright line and involve a number of variables to be considered. To be clear, the employer and/or position of Snodgrass will not protect him if it is determined that he acted recklessly. That the USFS was engaging in a prescribed burn may actually raise, rather than lower the standard to which Snodgrass will be held.

Many will attempt to hype this into something that it is not. The question is whether one neighbor, given the prevailing conditions, was reckless when starting fires adjacent to another neighbor."

Jim Carpenter
Grant County District Attorney