

18 January 2005

Dear Landowner,

As of the December, 2004, Colestin Rural Fire District monthly Board Meeting, the decision was made to approve a proposal to implement a new road signage project.

Road signage will be done as part of the Emergency Response section of the Mitigation Strategy ("Action Plan") portion of the fire district's new comprehensive Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The Colestin RFD and the Hilt VFC are participating jointly in this project.

The CRFD's Colestin/Hilt Wildfire Protection Plan Committee is currently working on establishing a fire plan guideline to address the potential for fire within our district, and ways in which to develop planned responses to emergencies and potential disasters as a community. Our website at www.crfd.org has full background and current information about the Plan.

Signage has been on our "wish list" for years. Due to budget considerations, we were unable to allocate funding specifically dedicated to this project until recently. Based on the level and stability of our financial reserves now, however, we have recently committed \$2,500 for the full implementation of this project.

Another factor has also compelled this decision: an increased awareness of the need for proactive and preventative fire safety measures in wildland and high fire risk zones has intensified the focus on emergency response preparation, resulting in new laws.

In Siskiyou County, California, address signage for emergency response is already a legal requirement for all homeowners, as per Siskiyou County Fire Code 4290, under "Fire Safe Regulations." This citation can also be accessed online at <http://www.cosiskiyou.ca.us>.

Signage is now a mandatory requirement for all Jackson County residences as of December of 2004, with the County's permanent adoption of the 2004 Land Development Ordinance (LDO).

Under the previous LDO of 2000, signage remained voluntary. The implementation of Oregon State Senate Bill 360, however, has forced counties to develop more stringent fire safety requirements in areas known to be at high risk for wildfire. With the 2004 LDO in effect now, according to Veronica Smith at Jackson County's Planning Department, the county code requires landowners to post address numbers for emergency identification purposes.

The specific portion regarding signage is indexed as 8.7.1 H (Chapter 8.7: WILDFIRE SAFETY, Section 1: Fire Safety Requirements, Subsection H) Address Signs. The code states: "Address signs will be posted at the driveway entrance from the public right-of-way in such a manner as to be visible in both directions from the roadway providing the access. Directional address signs must also be posted at all road/driveway junctions."

The 2004 LDO can be reviewed online, at: <http://www.co.jackson.or.us/Page.asp?NavID=1198>. The web address for Chapter 8.7.1 H is at http://www.co.jackson.or.us/Files/Chapter_8.pdf.

In anticipation of these developments, one of our committees has been working on signage resources and plans for the past year. The Signage Committee is now composed of Lisa Buttrey (Chair), Teri Thomas, Brian Dwyer, James Bowland, and Steve and Cheri Avgeris. John Ames also did preliminary groundwork by opening discussions with the County regarding the need for rationalizing addresses for signage.

To update previously published information and summarize key points about signage:

- In the past, the issue of road signage has been confounded by two other problems: Firstly, many roads in our valley are spurs or privately owned shared easements that are not legally recognized or county-maintained roads. Therefore, many "off-Colestin" residents have legal addresses on Colestin Road. This makes it difficult or impossible to locate some residents in an emergency. Because of the problems noted above, it was decided that unofficial road names will be used for all unnamed backroads, private roads, and easements, etc., off of the County roads. We have assigned names to such roads not having known names or nicknames, based on geographic location or locally identified landmarks. These names will be used for district emergency response purposes *only*, and are not legal road names. (Please note that if an owner or group of co-owners wishes to change the legal name of a road or a legal address, they would need to work with the County for this to happen.)
- Secondly, many actual Colestin Road addresses are out of sequence, in both Oregon and California, which adds to confusion in finding properties during emergencies. Despite the desirability of consistent address numbering, we will not attempt to re-sequence currently out-of-sequence address numbers at all for signage purposes, since this could result in more confusion in those areas affected. Resulting from our discussions with the County, however, new legal address numbers are being assigned in sequence, with spacing for future growth.
- **With signage, no one's *legally* assigned current address or road name will change.**
- The signs themselves will be standard, recognizable by any agency responding to an emergency (see specifics below).
- Special designations can be placed on these signs indicating water sources, safe emergency vehicle access and turnaround, and other resources available to fire and other emergency response agencies. Residents who comply with the regulations of OR State Senate Bill 360 as interpreted by the County (see below) and exceed them may also be given stickers to post that identify their property as defensible to responders.

Based on the new legal requirements, our Road Signage Committee has developed the following specific **GUIDELINES for signage:**

- Sign/s at least 4' high, or higher as needed to clear accumulated snow.
- Posts located sufficiently off road shoulder to allow for graders, wide loads, snow plows, snow berms, etc.
- Avoid phone, electric, and propane lines.

- Signs placed squarely facing direction of traffic flow approaching your home. Perform a nighttime trial run to determine where headlights illuminate, then position the sign/s for maximum visibility.
- Every fork in the driveway or road on the approach to your home must be clearly signed to lead Emergency Responders in. NOTE: Address numbers are *not* required to be posted *on or at* your house: emergency responders simply have to be able to *find* your residence.
- Sign/s must be visible from all directions of travel.
- Letters and numbers must be 3" or taller and reflective.

In accord with these Guidelines, we will be erecting road signs and house number signs at the main road, any intervening wyes, and at beginning of driveways. Standard green and white signs will be used for road name signs. Address numbering signs will be red with individual black numbers on a white reflective background. The address number signs themselves are 6" x 11 3/4" in size, and are designed for standard horizontal placement, which is most legible.

Both types of signs can be seen all over Jackson County (a drive towards Ashland on Old Highway 99 South is typical) and because we are a small, dedicated community and district, we expect our work to be better than average. Our red address numbering signs will also be slightly different than the standard variety, without a logo in yellow print on top.

All signs will be placed with a preference for using existing posts, fence lines, trees, etc., since this is generally less invasive, as well as less costly. 4-by-4-inch-thick posts will be used in deep-snow areas, and discreet 4-foot-high metal stakes in lower, less snow-prone areas.

Our plan is to contact residents ahead of installing signage in a given area in order to take residents' individual considerations into account as much as possible, and to coordinate and encourage them to be on site at the time of installation.

We are providing the standardized signs because they offer lots of advantages: they are cost effective, reflective, sufficiently large, and widely used and recognized. However, we also understand from preliminary spot-surveys of residents that some individuals may prefer to post their own signs, or if more than one posting is involved, to do a portion it. (For example, an owner may elect to install signage at the beginning of the driveway juncture to the residence, while the district installs signage at the County road and other junctures.)

We will do our best to customize signage arrangements with those of you who wish to become involved. To accomplish this, we will need to hear from you to let us know your preferences and concerns in order to work together, since there are parameters (as above) for size, type and location.

All signage expenses for standard district signs, district materials, and district labor will be covered by the Coleslin Rural Fire District and the Hilt Volunteer Fire Company (depending on location, as applicable). Please be advised that the fire districts cannot pay for, nor can they reimburse, costs for signs, signage materials or labor not provided by us.

We urge you to consider the ways in which an enhanced emergency response system will benefit you, and begin to think about where and how we can post, or can help you to post, address signs for an emergency response to your property. In particular, make a mental note as to where your headlights fall as you drive home on a dark evening, so you will be able to give us your input for optimizing sign placement, either before or at the time when we begin work in your area.

The County is aware, and we at the fire district are aware, that compliance with new county ordinances takes time, as well as funding. While we now have the funding, we do not expect that signage will occur or be completed overnight. We will be working on this project for some time to come, as part of the overall Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

We will honor our original intention to hold a public comment period for the community between now and this April 1st, in order to incorporate feedback and concerns as we begin to implement this project. After April 1st, 2005, we will proceed using the guidelines as stated above, balancing sensitivity to each site with the goal of effective sign placement.

If anyone has concerns about the placement of district signs, or does not want to use district materials for their signs, or elects not to participate at all, they must call us before April 1st, 2005. Those who do not contact us at all to arrange alternatives prior to April 1st, 2005, will be on our list to receive district signs at locations we deem to be most effective and necessary.

Please contact us with your responses and any specific concerns and considerations, at the fire district at (541) 488-1768, or call our signage committee Chair, Lisa Buttrey, at 821-5479.

Thank you,

Betsy A. Bradshaw
For the Colestin Rural Fire District