

Lane County Sheriff's Office

Clifton G. Harrold, Sheriff



May 2, 2019

Dear Co-Chairs Girod, Holvey and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means;

The Lane County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) is entering into an agreement to partner with the University of Oregon to allow installation of the ShakeAlert and AlertWildfire systems at LCSO-owned communications sites around Lane County. This partnership is mutually beneficial to the University, LCSO and the public who reside in and visit Lane County year round.

These systems will improve awareness of wildfires in an area of Oregon and here within Lane County that has experienced multiple recent forest fires. In the past two years, these fires have endangered businesses, homes and public infrastructure, as well as created general concerns such as air quality that could affect the wellbeing of the larger population.

In 2018, a fire in the Cougar Reservoir area came within 5 miles of a communications tower that supports LCSO, Lane County Search and Rescue and Federal Forestry operations. A second smaller fire in that same year in a nearby region was within 10 miles of a communications tower that serves cell phone, fire, police, sheriff, state and public utilities communications systems. If this site would have been affected by this wildfire, all communications would have been lost to communities along Highway 126 in western Lane County.

In preparation for a large scale earthquake event, such as Cascadia, having early warning systems to allow for detection of seismic activity would greatly benefit Lane County residents. It would also allow for better seismic activity data within our region to help identify key areas that need improvement to become more resilient during a large earthquake event. Several of our communications sites are in extremely remote areas. If we had better awareness of an area's seismic activity, it would allow for better planning and preparation for improvements to allow for more resilient communication facilities that could be inaccessible for days to weeks after a disaster. This has been one lesson learned after the 2019 snow event in Lane County. This emergency brought to light the need to have better information from our remote sites to indicate if a response is necessary to keep public safety communication systems working for the benefit of our responders and our citizens.

In light of the above statements, our agency urges the Committee to support the \$12,000,000 capital investment being requested for the AlertWildfire and ShakeAlert warning systems. As stated, this will not only benefit the University and LCSO, but will also provide benefit to the general public and help ensure their awareness and safety before, during and after a wildfire or seismic event. This is especially true for residents in remote areas of our county and our smaller communities who would be on the front lines and be directly served by the use of these systems. By investing in sensors for the ShakeAlert earthquake early warning system, cameras for AlertWildfire and telemetry to allow real-time communication, the State will be advancing a multi-hazard approach to disaster response and mitigation for years to come.

Respectfully,

Brian Greig
Communications Network Coordinator
Lane County Sheriff's Office
Administrative Division