

Agencies respond to concerns following Portland scrap yard fire

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A five-alarm fire in a Northeast Portland scrap yard in March 2018 destroyed several homes and forced hundreds to stay indoors or evacuate to avoid black smoke billowing west. A week later, state and local authorities met with Cully neighborhood residents to respond to concerns and lingering questions — about the fire, the response, and what happens next.



The fire broke out about 9 a.m. Monday, March 12, 2018

Below is a comprehensive list of community questions, with responses from Multnomah County Environmental Health, Multnomah County Emergency Management, the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management, Portland Fire and Rescue, the Portland Water Bureau, the Portland Bureau of Development Services, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and the Oregon Health Authority:

What Now?

Could this event qualify for a disaster declaration? A disaster declaration is intended to increase funds for rebuilding after a disaster. Multnomah County may be eligible for low-interest long term Small Business Administration (SBA) loans to help small businesses recover from economic impacts of lost revenue from the Fire. Before the county is eligible, at least five businesses need to express interest in applying. To apply, contact em.dutyofficer@multco.us (<mailto:em.dutyofficer@multco.us>). More information on the SBA program is available at disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/Information/Index (<http://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/Information/Index>). If enough businesses were affected, the County may be able to pursue a disaster declaration for the purpose of SBA loans.

We would first need the business specific information to justify the application. Owners of property impacted by the fire may also be eligible for a [property tax reduction](http://www.oregon.gov/DOR/forms/FormsPubs/app-for-proration_310-083.pdf) (http://www.oregon.gov/DOR/forms/FormsPubs/app-for-proration_310-083.pdf). This is a state program that does not require a disaster declaration and is part of Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 308.425.

For more information about the disaster declaration visit: <http://www.oregon.gov/oem/emops/Pages/Disaster-Declaration-Process.aspx> (<http://www.oregon.gov/oem/emops/Pages/Disaster-Declaration-Process.aspx>)

What is the owner's responsibility and liability for this fire that impacted the community? Who will pay for damages, temporary displacement, cleaning costs, legal help and insurance, garden clean up, business losses, health care and trauma counseling? Oregon law does not provide DEQ authority to require a responsible party (in this case the property owner and operator of NW Metals) to compensate third parties for damages caused by the release of hazardous materials.

Community members who have lost or damaged property or costs incurred to business or personal use of their property because of the fire can document those costs for insurance purposes. It is up to individual residents to make a decision whether to take their claims to the owner of the salvage yard, NW Metals. DEQ is not aware of any insurance policies that might cover damages people experienced as a result of the fire.

Anyone who is a resident of Multnomah County can seek health care at [county clinics](https://multco.us/health/primary-care-clinics) (<https://multco.us/health/primary-care-clinics>), including people with a low income and who have no health insurance. Medical, dental, and mental health care is available at low or no cost, and interpretation services are always free. Residents should call 503-988-5558 for appointments.



Multnomah County's Environmental Health Director Jae Douglas responded to questions during the March 2018 fire.

Air Quality

What was in the smoke? Black smoke from sources such as auto salvage yards can have fine particulate and toxic chemicals, including asbestos, aldehydes, acid gases, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, benzene, toluene, styrene, metals and dioxins. Smoke from burning tires or plastic material can

include toxic chemicals of synthetic rubber compounds. Each tire contains about two gallons of petroleum products similar to heating oil.

Is the air still polluted? As of March 13, 2018, the Environmental Protection Agency monitoring results showed that particulate matter dropped below levels of concern throughout the evacuation area associated with the fire. EPA studies show Portland, like many other cities, has a greater health risk from air toxics than less populated areas. Portland's air is comparable to other cities with similar populations. For more information on air toxics, visit DEQ's [FAQs about air toxics webpage](http://www.oregon.gov/deq/aq/air-toxics/Pages/toxics-qa.aspx) (<http://www.oregon.gov/deq/aq/air-toxics/Pages/toxics-qa.aspx>).

Are there long-term health effects for people who breathed the smoke? Pollutants from the fire were most dangerous when you could see and breathe in the smoke. The harm to health depends on the amount of the pollutants a person breathes in, and on the length of time a person breathes them. The period of time when people could have been breathing in smoke was short (about a day and a half), so long-term health effects are not likely. Because the fire is out, people who have not experienced health effects related to the fire are not likely to experience any in the future.

In some areas, the air still smells funny. What can we do about it? Please report anything that may be pollution through DEQ's pollution complaint system: Phone: 1-888-997-7888 or online at <http://bit.ly/PollutionComplaint> (<http://bit.ly/PollutionComplaint>).

When they start digging and cleaning at NW Metals, will someone be monitoring air quality? DEQ will be overseeing cleanup activities at the site, and does not anticipate that that these activities will generate significant air emissions. No air quality monitoring is planned.

Will DEQ do any additional air monitoring in Cully? DEQ is in the process of placing an annual air toxics monitoring station in Cully at the NW corner of Helensview High School (near NE 87th and Killingsworth). This monitor will provide valuable community data for a number of air toxics, including metals. The data will provide a longer term picture of air quality in the area, and after one year of sampling, the DEQ will prepare a report on the monitoring results.

In the future, what can I do to protect my health if there is a fire?

- If you are advised to stay indoors, stay indoors and keep indoor air as clean as possible by keeping windows and doors closed and turning off any heating and air conditioning systems that pull air in from outside.
- When smoke levels are high, reduce sources of indoor air pollution. These include smoke from candles, fireplaces, gas stoves and tobacco smoke. Avoid vacuuming, because vacuuming stirs up particles already inside your home.
- Tune in to local TV and watch social media for guidance
- If you are concerned or if you have health issues that put you at greater risk, you don't have to wait for an evacuation order.

Do masks help? Do not rely on masks for protection. Paper "dust" masks found at most hardware stores are designed to trap large particles, such as sawdust. They will not protect your lungs from smoke. There are specially-designed masks called respirators. These must be fitted, tested and properly worn to protect against smoke. If you choose to wear a respirator, select an "N95" respirator. Make sure you find someone who has been trained to help you select the right size, test the seal and teach you how to use it.

General Health

Who is most at risk in smoky conditions? Children, the elderly and people with heart and lung problems are at greatest risk.

Young children and infants breathe more times per minute than adults and take in more air volume relative to their body size, making them among the sensitive groups when air quality is poor. People age 65 and older, and those with known heart and lung problems like asthma and emphysema, are more sensitive to lung irritation from breathing in small particles. They may experience coughing, wheezing, trouble breathing, chest tightness, lightheadedness or unusual tiredness. It is especially important that anyone with these conditions stay inside and have their usual medications on hand. Anyone with symptoms that have not gotten better should contact their health care provider right away.

Where do we go for health care if we can't afford to see a doctor? Anyone who is a resident of Multnomah County can seek health care at [county clinics](https://multco.us/health/primary-care-clinics) (<https://multco.us/health/primary-care-clinics>), including people with a low income and who have no health insurance. Medical, dental, and mental health care is available at low or no cost, and interpretation services are always free. Residents should call 503-988-5558 for appointments. Residents may also dial [2-1-1](http://211info.org/) (<http://211info.org/>) to find low-cost and sliding-scale services in your area. Call [Oregon Poison Center](http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/outreach/oregon-poison-center/index.cfm) (<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/outreach/oregon-poison-center/index.cfm>) if you have questions about inhaling toxins but do not feel ready to visit a doctor.

How does it affect pets and animals? As irritating as smoke can be to people, it can cause health problems for animals too. Smoke from fires affect pets, horses, livestock and wildlife. If you can see or feel the effects of smoke yourself, you also should take precautions to keep your animals – both pets and livestock – safe. Animals with heart or lung disease are especially at risk from smoke and should be closely watched during all periods of poor air quality. Look for signs of possible smoke or dust irritation in animals that are similar to those seen in humans. Birds, especially pet birds, are extremely susceptible to respiratory problems from smoke and particulates in the air.

How does the soot and toxic chemicals impact groundwater? In the case of NW Metals, the property has “underground injection control” devices, or dry wells, that are meant to capture the rainwater from the site. During the fire, these dry wells also captured all fire suppression chemicals and everything that drained off while extinguishing the fire. DEQ is requiring NW Metals to sample the groundwater in and around the dry wells to determine potential contamination from the fire, and from auto dismantling activities that occurred on the property before the fire. Based on sampling results, NW Metals may be required to perform additional activities to protect groundwater.

What is the clean up plan at Sacagawea Head Start? At this time, DEQ is not planning or requiring any specific cleanup activities on the Sacagawea school property, 4800 NE 74th Ave. Cleanup activities are needed at NW Metals because of soil contamination created as a result of the fire and fire-fighting activities, and potential contamination from industrial activities on the site before the fire. These activities did not happen at Sacagawea.

Are there any risks for children? It is unlikely for there to be large quantities of residue from the fire on surfaces except for those very near the fire (maybe even contained on the scrapyard property). This is because only a small fraction of pollutants released in the fire smoke actually settle onto the ground. Most disperse and mix into the atmosphere getting less and less concentrated with more distance from the fire. Parents should help children avoid visible ash and soot. Outdoor soot can be rinsed away with water. Indoor soot can be cleaned up following the steps recommended in the cleaning section below.



Firefighters worked over night to put out the salvage yard fire near NE 75th Ave. and NE Killingsworth Street

Cleaning

How do I know if I need to clean my house? If you have visible soot or ash in your house, state health officials recommend the steps below to clean it up. If no soot or ash is visible, then no special cleaning is necessary.

How do we clean up the odor and soot? After a fire, experts recommend that families living nearby:

- Remove your shoes before you go inside to avoid tracking in soot.
- Put on pants, long sleeves and gloves (such as dishwashing gloves) before you begin cleaning.
- Open doors and windows to clear out the smell of smoke from the air.
- Use a damp cloth to wipe ash from household surfaces.
- Wipe off children's toys.
- Wipe soot and smoke from walls, furniture and floors using a mild soap or detergent and warm water.
- Gently sweep ash from the floors and follow with a wet mop. Avoid vacuums without a HEPA filter, so you don't put ash back into the air.
- Wash the family pets.
- Take your vehicles to a local brushless car wash to avoid scratching the paint.

Do we need to change our air filters? Is the HVAC system in my house affected by the fire? What are the effects of turning it back on? If your HVAC system was running during the fire, then changing the filter would be a good idea. If the system was not running, then it was not likely affected by the fire. When turning the HVAC back on for the first time after the fire, it is a good idea to open windows throughout the house for a few minutes to purge any odors trapped in the ducts.

There are particles settling or re-settling in my home. Is it okay to breath in these particles when cleaning? It is best to use wet cleaning methods so that these particles are not re-suspended in the air. See answer to "How do I clean up the odor and soot?" above. The small amounts of particles re-suspended during proper cleaning would not be enough to pose long-term health effects.

Who is responsible for cleaning up the site? What is the clean up plan? The property owner and operator of NW Metals are responsible for cleaning up the site, with DEQ oversight. DEQ issued a cleanup order March 28 that requires NW Metals to properly remove fire debris, sample soil on site and adjacent burned properties, and determine potential groundwater impacts. DEQ will post updates about cleanup requirements online at <http://bit.ly/DEQscrapfire> (<http://bit.ly/DEQscrapfire>).

Is there a cleanup plan for Sacajawea Head Start? At this time, DEQ is not planning or requiring any specific cleanup activities on the Sacagawea school property. Cleanup activities are needed at NW Metals because of soil contamination created as a result of the fire and fire-fighting activities, and potential contamination from industrial activities on the site before the fire. These activities did not happen at Sacagawea.

What can be recovered from our apartments that filled with smoke? The Federal Emergency Management Administration has published a guide for residents who have lost their homes and belongings due to fire. They publish in both [English](https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa_46.pdf?utm_source=website&utm_medium=pubsapp&utm_content=After%20the%20Fire!%20Returning%20to%20Normal&utm_campaign=R3D) (https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa_46.pdf?utm_source=website&utm_medium=pubsapp&utm_content=After%20the%20Fire!%20Returning%20to%20Normal&utm_campaign=R3D) and [Spanish](https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa_46s.pdf?utm_source=website&utm_medium=pubsapp&utm_content=After%20the%20Fire!%20Returning%20to%20Normal%20(Spanish)&utm_campaign=R3D) ([https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa_46s.pdf?utm_source=website&utm_medium=pubsapp&utm_content=After%20the%20Fire!%20Returning%20to%20Normal%20\(Spanish\)&utm_campaign=R3D](https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa_46s.pdf?utm_source=website&utm_medium=pubsapp&utm_content=After%20the%20Fire!%20Returning%20to%20Normal%20(Spanish)&utm_campaign=R3D)).

Soil and Water

Were there any issues with water pressure during the fire? Portland Fire and Rescue needed a lot of water to fight the fire, and so the Portland Water Bureau opened valves to increase water supply. At the peak of firefighting efforts, nearly half a million gallons an hour was flowing onto the fire; that's nearly 8,000 gallons a minute! Even at this exceedingly high demand, Portland Water Bureau was able to provide all the water that Portland Fire and Rescue needed to fight the fire.

Why was the water coming out of our faucets brown during the fire? Sediment from the Bull Run Watershed settles out of the water and accumulates in the bottom of the pipes. In this case, the fire hoses were pumping out water so fast that they stirred up that sediment. When water appears discolored, the Water Bureau recommends that people limit water use as it may clog filters and discolor white laundry. Customers can monitor water clarity by checking one faucet every hour by running the water for 30 seconds to two minutes. Once water appears clear the bureau recommends flushing any faucets where discolored water was present. The bureau's continued sampling throughout the distribution system has seen no water quality impacts as a result of the fire. Customers can contact the Water Line with any questions at 503-823-7525 or WBWaterLine@portlandoregon.gov (<mailto:orWBWaterLine@portlandoregon.gov>).

Did the fire response have any impacts on Portland's groundwater supply? The fire was not located close enough to the Columbia South Shore Well Field, the City of Portland's groundwater system, to have an impact on its groundwater.

Cully neighborhood relies on urban farming for local fresh food. We have 30 farms and 4 community gardens. Are they safe? Yes, it's safe to eat produce from local gardens. But it's always a good idea to wash or peel produce before you eat it. That's especially true when gardens are in cities and industrial areas.

How will the smoke and toxics affect the soil? Only a small fraction of pollutants from the fire settle onto the ground, mostly very close to the source of the fire such as the scrapyards property itself. Most pollutants in smoke disperse into the atmosphere and mix with cleaner air becoming less and less concentrated with more distance

from the fire. It is unlikely that a significant amount of the pollutants from the fire will impact soil and gardens in the area.

Do we need special soap for rinsing fruits and vegetables or is plain water ok? Plain water is okay.

Is it safe to grow and plant in the soil that is in the evacuation zone? Yes. Only a small fraction of pollutants released in a fire settle onto the ground, and once mixed with soil, they are not easily absorbed by plants.

Precautions found in [OHA's Healthy Gardening web page](http://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/HealthyEnvironments/HealthyNeighborhoods/HealthyGardening/pages/index.aspx)

(<http://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/HealthyEnvironments/HealthyNeighborhoods/HealthyGardening/pages/index.aspx>) and [FAQ related to the scrapyard fire](http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/Preparedness/CurrentHazards/Pages/ne-portland-scrap-yard-fire-2018.aspx)

(<http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/Preparedness/CurrentHazards/Pages/ne-portland-scrap-yard-fire-2018.aspx>) are adequate to protect against any residual risks related to this fire.

Should we test our soil for contaminants? OHA and DEQ don't recommend residents test their soil due to this fire. Only a small fraction of pollutants released in a fire settle onto the ground, and once mixed with dirt, they are not easily absorbed by plants.

Precautions found in [OHA's Healthy Gardening web page](http://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/HealthyEnvironments/HealthyNeighborhoods/HealthyGardening/pages/index.aspx)

(<http://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/HealthyEnvironments/HealthyNeighborhoods/HealthyGardening/pages/index.aspx>) and [FAQ related to the scrapyard fire](http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/Preparedness/CurrentHazards/Pages/ne-portland-scrap-yard-fire-2018.aspx)

(<http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/Preparedness/CurrentHazards/Pages/ne-portland-scrap-yard-fire-2018.aspx>) are adequate to protect against any residual risks related to this fire.

If we wanted to test our soil anyway, which contaminants should we test for? The types of pollutants coming from a scrap yard fire could include metals, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), dioxins, and furans. These contaminants are commonly found in dirt in cities.

Emergency Response

Who makes the decision to evacuate? When were those made? Portland Fire & Rescue ordered some residents to evacuate areas directly around the fire shortly after it began, and asked others in the surrounding area to remain inside with doors and windows closed to keep out the smoke. Multnomah County health officials, in partnership with the city, expanded the evacuation that night.



Randy Nattis with the EPA, shows reporters how his team used monitors to measure pollution in the air.

Why was a second evacuation order given at night, hours after the fire began? After the fire broke out and an initial evacuation zone was established, Portland Fire & Rescue asked the Environmental Protection Agency to begin monitoring the air quality. Those monitors began providing data about 2 p.m. As evening fell, atmospheric pressure changed, and smoke stayed closer to the ground. Winds also increased, spreading the smoky air further from the source of the blaze. Once that happened, the EPA started to monitor areas outside the initial evacuation area. In order to be confident in the data, the agency evaluated two hours worth of data before concluding the changing weather pattern was likely to persist into the night.

Are there enough fire hydrants to protect homes from industrial fires in the Cully Neighborhood? There are plenty of fire hydrants in the area. In fact, seven fire hydrants, located near NE 75th and NE Killingsworth, supplied water for firefighters. Each ladder truck, paired with a supply engine, is capable of pumping 1,500 gallons of water per minute. At the peak of firefighting efforts, nearly half a million gallons an hour was flowing onto the fire (nearly 8,000 gallons a minute).

At times, in very large fires, the heat index of the fire is just too great to overcome, even with a truly unlimited water supply – a good example of this would be a wild fire with air tankers dropping thousands of gallons. In the case of this fire, the fire load was very dense and largely plastics from cars – insulation, upholstery, wiring insulation, paint, etc. These materials burn very hot, hotter than a wood fire, for example. So they require more water to cool the fire and limit the spread. Add to that the east wind. Wind-driven fires are challenging in two ways: Flames are pushed by the winds and into things nearby that can burn, like houses and trees. Wind also blows the water pumping from the hoses, making the stream less focused when it reaches the fire.

Are the fire hydrants in the right places? Hydrants were distributed in a standard fashion throughout the City of Portland. There are plenty of hydrants for a standard house fire. Large-scale incidents will always be a challenge, but in this case, there were no reports of water supply or water pressure deficiencies.

Why did places like La Clinica close early? Shortly after the fire began, some businesses made the individual decision to close. Managers at Multnomah County asked their staff to leave La Clinica de Buen Salud, and the social service agency Bienestar de la Familia, when people began smelling the smoke.

How were pet evacuations handled? The Oregon Humane Society, which has a facility near the fire, volunteered to assist during the day. Multnomah County Animal Services also helped families evacuate and facilitate emergency shelter for animals at no cost.

Multnomah County Animal Services provided food and animal crates for the emergency shelter. Shelters can be upsetting for pets and crates offer comfort and safety for nervous and stressed pets. During this fire, Multnomah County Animal Services also responded to requests for help from families in the affected area, going to the scene to provide transport and emergency shelter for dogs. Multnomah County Animal Services has an emergency response and rescue website: <https://multcopets.org/animal-rescue-emergency> (<https://multcopets.org/animal-rescue-emergency>).

How did agencies respond to people with special needs? Fire and Rescue helped to evacuate a care home after receiving notification from [2-1-1 Info](http://211info.org/) (<http://211info.org/>). Anyone needing assistance during this event was told to contact 211 to arrange for assistance on a specific case-by-case basis so that needs could be addressed individually. Anyone who felt they were in immediate danger was instructed to call 911. This information was put out through social media, conventional media, and publicalerts.org.

Multnomah County and the City of Portland coordinated transportation and support for anyone needing assistance. TriMet provided seven buses and two paratransit buses to provide transportation to the shelter. Ambulances transported people from the evacuation zone to Trimet busses. Providing assistance to all people in an equitable way is the mission of all our operations. Portland's Bureau of Emergency Management and Multnomah County Emergency Management contacted schools in the area to ensure their administrators were aware of the incident.

Beyond self-identification during the disaster, there are two ways people can let us know in advance if they may have specific needs during an evacuation or sheltering operation. First, everyone can sign up for public alerts at publicalerts.org. The form includes an optional section to let authorities know about of any additional needs you or a family member may have. You can provide as much or as little information as you want. This information will be available to first responders and shelter coordinators during an evacuation and shelter operation. It is important to remember to update your profile as your needs change. Second, Multnomah County Human Services identifies its clients who need additional support. During an event like a fire, department staff reach out to those clients to find out what help they may need.



Capt. Louisa Jones with Portland Fire & Rescue said 23 Engines responded to the March 12 blaze.

What is a five-alarm fire? What are the different categories of alarm? Each alarm is based on a predetermined set of resources selected based on function and location in the city. Five is the maximum alarm for the City of Portland. For this fire, a total of 23 Engines, seven Ladder Trucks, one Heavy Rescue, two Rehab/Air Units, nine Chiefs, the Mobile Command Unit, and a full fire investigation team were on scene at the height of operations.

When there is an emergency in an area, where can people go? Multnomah County, in coordination with the American Red Cross Cascades Region, opens a Disaster Resource Center as close as possible to an emerging event, while still being a safe distance away. These centers provide information, services and refreshments, and they may expand to an overnight shelter if needed. Anyone, including pets, impacted by an event, can go to a center. Agencies offer free transportation, interpretation and translation services and other services for people with additional needs. Those services are always free.

How are non-native English speakers provided emergency and disaster information? People can get immediate warnings of dangerous events when they [sign up for Public Alerts](https://member.everbridge.net/index/453003085612905#/login) (<https://member.everbridge.net/index/453003085612905#/login>). People can choose to receive alerts in 10 languages including Spanish, Somali and Vietnamese. Local, county, state, and federal agencies use many ways to get information to the public. These include providing information to community organizations and community leaders to disseminate through their networks, social media platforms, and traditional TV and Internet news sites. They also take information from U.S. Census reports, health and human services records, and other data to help identify languages spoken and accessibility needs regarding impacted communities. If materials do not already exist in the the languages identified, then information can be translated and interpreters can be provided.

General Questions

Why did this happen in the first place? Until the fire investigation unit has completed its work, we will not have an answer for this question. But we do know the wind made the fire much worse. The wind pushed the smoke down along the ground, rather than allowing the smoke column to rise up in the air.

Is it legal for junkyards to be there? How are these industries regulated? Yes. Salvage yards are industrially zoned and in compliance with City and State building codes and zoning regulations enforced by the Portland Bureau of Development Services. Auto dismantlers must follow all local, state, and federal land use and environmental regulations, including:

- Land use: Local governments—either a city or county—are responsible for determining land use and zoning decisions for businesses, such as whether a certain activity is allowed in an area with a specific zoning code.
- Solid waste: The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality regulates industries based on state and federal environmental law. If an auto dismantler has an Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) Dismantler Certificate from the Oregon Department of Transportation, then by law, the auto dismantler is not considered a disposal site and not required to have a DEQ solid waste permit.
- Waste tires: If an auto dismantler has more than 1,500 waste tires, it is required to have a waste tire permit with DEQ. Based on two site visits since the March 12 fire, DEQ has determined that NW Metals had more than 1,500 tires on site and should have had a waste tire permit. This is one of the [compliance concerns DEQ has identified](http://www.oregon.gov/newsroom/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?newsid=2649) (<http://www.oregon.gov/newsroom/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?newsid=2649>).

DEQ encourages residents to report any ongoing concerns through DEQ's pollution complaint system: Phone: 1-888-997-7888 or online at <http://bit.ly/PollutionComplaint> (<http://bit.ly/PollutionComplaint>). DEQ will follow up and investigate environmental pollution complaints.

Did DEQ or the city of Portland receive prior complaints about NW Metals? If so, what did they do about it?

The Portland Bureau of Development Services received a complaint in January 2018 of junked cars being stacked too high in the yard. However, the land was zoned for the current use at that property, and so the complaint was deemed unfounded. The DEQ received four complaints about NW Metals since it began operating in 2014.

- There were two air-related complaints, one in 2014 for which DEQ conducted a site visit, and another in 2015. DEQ did not identify environmental violations in response to those complaints.
- In December 2015, DEQ received a complaint but was unable to reach the complainant to obtain more information. DEQ did not perform additional follow up regarding the complaint.
- In December 2017, DEQ received a complaint but did not conduct follow up. DEQ was not timely in responding to that complaint; it is now planning additional outreach to auto dismantlers statewide to share best management practices as well as what is required for the facilities to be in compliance with environmental laws.

As a result of site visits to NW Metals after the fire, DEQ identified violations of environmental law and has taken enforcement action. Please see links: [Cleanup order for NW Metals](http://www.oregon.gov/deq/FilterDocs/raonwmetals.pdf) (<http://www.oregon.gov/deq/FilterDocs/raonwmetals.pdf>) and [Violations identified at NW Metals](http://www.oregon.gov/deq/FilterDocs/preenforceNWM.pdf) (<http://www.oregon.gov/deq/FilterDocs/preenforceNWM.pdf>).

Are we going to continue allowing other junk yards to open or be established in our community? Local governments are responsible for land use and zoning to determine where businesses are allowed to be located. For questions about land use and zoning, contact the City of Portland's [Bureau of Development Services](https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/article/519984) (<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/article/519984>).

What can we do about current junk yards in our neighborhood that may also be risky? If you observe runoff, spills, mismanagement of waste, or other environmental concerns at existing auto dismantlers, please file an environmental complaint with DEQ. You can call 1-888-997-7888 or file a complaint online at <http://bit.ly/PollutionComplaint> (<http://bit.ly/PollutionComplaint>). Depending on the type of complaint, DEQ

investigates and may conduct site inspections. If DEQ inspectors identify compliance issues during a site inspection, DEQ will work with the business to correct the compliance issue.

DEQ is available to provide technical assistance to existing auto dismantlers. DEQ recommends that existing auto dismantlers follow the guidance in [DEQ's Auto Dismantler Handbook](http://bit.ly/DEQAutoHandbook) (<http://bit.ly/DEQAutoHandbook>), which provides detailed instructions on best management practices and environmental regulations for these types of businesses.

Portland Fire conducts periodic inspections of commercial properties about every two years. While the Fire Code does not prohibit this type of use, it does define setback and height restrictions. If neighbors have concerns they can contact the Fire Marshal's Office at 503-823-3770. Complaints can also be filed with the Bureau of Development Services at 50-823-CODE (2633), which is authorized to enforce compliance with City and State building codes. Anyone with a complaint or an issue about structures that are dangerous is encouraged to call or go online at <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/34170> (<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/34170>) to find out more on how to file a complaint.

How can we be sure other scrap yards won't harm the environment? It is the auto dismantler's responsibility to identify all regulatory requirements that apply and obtain the necessary land use approvals and environmental permits before commencing operation. Depending on the processes, DEQ might require a variety of permits, including a stormwater management permit, a waste tire permit, or an air quality permit to control painting, grinding, sandblasting and other emissions. DEQ recommends that an auto dismantler carry out activities as follows:

- The operator should perform all auto dismantling activities inside buildings and on sealed concrete or paved surfaces to prevent releases that could impact water, land or air.
- Dismantle vehicles in ways that keep down dust and prevent spills to the ground.
- All materials, whether product or waste, should be managed to prevent spills, releases, fires or other hazards to people or the environment.
- Collect all fluids and store them in containers that are closed, labeled, and kept under cover.
- Decide whether to reuse, recycle or dispose of each material, and understand all applicable requirements to the management of these materials.

[DEQ's Auto Dismantler Handbook](http://bit.ly/DEQAutoHandbook) (<http://bit.ly/DEQAutoHandbook>) provides detailed instructions on best management practices and environmental regulations for these types of businesses. DEQ is also available to provide technical assistance to any new or existing business on practices that should be followed to protect the environment.