

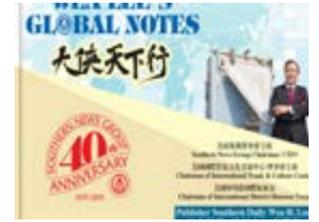


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Portland residents told 'BE READY' to flee as West wildfires rage



A haze from wildfire smoke lingers over the gutted Medford Estates neighborhood in the aftermath of the Alameda fire in Medford, Oregon, U.S., September 10, 2020. Picture taken with a drone. REUTERS/Adrees Latif

MOLALLA, Ore./MEDFORD, Ore. (Reuters) - Around half a million people in Oregon were ordered to evacuate on Friday and residents of its largest city, Portland, were told to be ready to go as extreme wind-driven wildfires scorched U.S. West Coast states, causing at least 24 deaths.

A haze from wildfire smoke lingers over the gutted Medford Estates neighborhood in the aftermath of the Alameda fire in Medford, Oregon, U.S., September 10, 2020. Picture taken with a drone. REUTERS/Adrees Latif
About one hundred wildfires have burned an area nearly as large as the state of New Jersey across the U.S. West, with Oregon bearing the brunt of the destruction.

Molalla, a community about 25 miles (40 km) south of downtown Portland, was an ash-covered ghost town after its more than 9,000 residents were told to evacuate, only 30 refusing to leave, the city's fire department said.

The logging town was on the front line of a vast evacuation area stretching north to within three miles (4.8 km) of downtown Portland.

About 10 percent of the state's population faced red "GO!" warnings to leave homes immediately, while hundreds of thousands more were under yellow "BE SET" warnings, to leave at a moment's notice, or green "BE READY" alerts.

Towns southeast of Portland were at the mercy of wind

direction and strength after two of the state's largest wildfires merged into one in the Cascade mountains.

As winds dropped and moisture levels rose on Friday, firefighters launched drones into an apocalyptic yellowish smog to see how close the flames were.

"We don't know where the fire is," said Molalla Fire Department Lieutenant Mike Penunuri, staring into smoke in the town center which reduced visibility to one block.

In southern Oregon, a dystopian scene of burned residential subdivisions and trailer parks stretched for miles along Highway 99 south of Medford through Phoenix and Talent, one of the worst hit areas, according to a Reuters photographer at the scene.

Blazes jumped from wildfires burning through scrub and forest to suburban firestorms as flames leaped from house to house.

Oregon Department of Forestry fire chief Doug Grafe said he would need twice the 3,000 personnel he currently had to get a grip on around three dozen major blazes.

RELATED COVERAGE

Police debunk social media misinformation linking Oregon wildfires to activists
In neighboring Washington state to the north, online video from the Tacoma area showed fires starting in a residential area

and setting homes ablaze, locals running from house to house to warn neighbors.

"Everybody out, everybody out!" a man screamed as firefighters tried to douse flames.

The death toll from the siege of West Coast fires that began in August jumped to 24 after seven people were found dead late Thursday in torched mountain communities around 85 miles (137 km) north of Sacramento, California, state fire authority Cal Fire reported.

Over 68,000 people were under evacuation orders in California where the largest fire in state history has burned over 740,000 acres (299,470 hectares) in the Mendocino National Forest around 120 miles (190 km) northwest of Sacramento.

"We had four hours to pack up our pets and a few medications and things like that," said retiree John Maylone from an evacuation center in Fresno, California, after he was forced to leave three of his 30 cats as he fled the massive Creek Fire. Police opened a criminal arson investigation into the Oregon fire which destroyed much of Phoenix and Talent.

But at least four Oregon police departments warned of "fake" online messages appearing to be from law enforcement that blamed left-wing anti-fascists and right-wing Proud Boy activists for starting the fires.

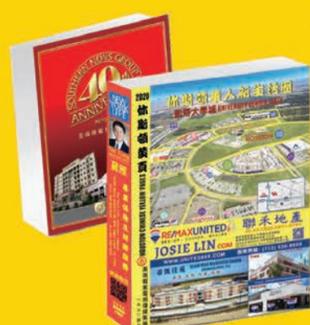
Blazes in central Oregon also destroyed multiple communities in the Cascade mountains and torched areas of coastal rain-forest normally spared from wildfires. In eastern Washington

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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

09/11/2020

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

We Commemorate The 911 Tragedy

On September 11, 2001, there were four coordinated terrorists attacks carried out by the terrorist group Al-Qaeda against the United States. The World Trade Center Twin towers attack resulted in 2,977 fatalities, over 25,000 injuries and substantial long-time health consequences and \$10 billion in infrastructure and property damage.

9/11 is the single deadliest terrorist attack in human history

The hijackers were Islamic terrorists from Saudi Arabia and several other Arab nations reportedly financed by Osama Bin Laden. As millions watched

in terror, the World Trade Center was attacked, another plane circled over downtown Washington D.C. before crashing into the Pentagon military headquarter where 125 military personnel and civilians were killed. A fourth plane headed from Newark Airport to California was hijacked and crashed into a farm area near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. All 44 people aboard were killed. The plane's target may have been the White House, the U.S. Capitol or Camp David in Maryland.

Today the world is still in chaos from Asia to the Middle East. We have a lot of conflicts plus the coronavirus pandemic

which has given so many people suffering and pain. And we still don't have any immediately solution.

We still urge all nations to sit down and face this international issue and not use force.

The 2020 presidential election is coming. Whoever wins will lead America and also will lead the world.

In this difficult time we need to be very careful not to go to war, which now means nuclear war. We all need to remember the history of mankind. It is a

mirror and we should not make the same mistake again.

Today the first memorials to the victims of the September 11 attacks in 2001 were posted online as hundreds of webmasters posted their own thoughts and links to the Red Cross and other rescue agencies.



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Publisher Southern Daily Wea H. Lee

Stay Home!

BUSINESS

Wear Mask!

Microsoft on Thursday reported that it is seeing "increasing" cyberattacks originating in Russia, China and Iran targeting its customers, including attacks against political groups and the presidential campaigns of President Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden. Tom Burt, corporate vice president of customer security and trust at Microsoft, detailed in a blog post the efforts by three major foreign hacking groups to target the campaigns, along with other political organizations and individuals. "The activity we are announcing today makes clear that foreign activity groups have stepped up their efforts targeting the 2020 election as had been anticipated, and is consistent with what the U.S. government and others have reported," Burt wrote. These efforts included Russian hacking group "Strontium" targeting more than 200 organizations, political campaigns and parties over the past year, including U.S.-based consultants for the Democratic and Republican parties, think tanks such as the German Marshall Fund and political parties in the United Kingdom. Strontium, also known as "Fancy Bear," is the same group that hacked into the Democratic National Committee networks in 2016. Microsoft took legal action against the group in 2017, with a federal court ordering the group to stop targeting Microsoft customers and using Microsoft logos in malicious email phishing campaigns.

Microsoft Warns Russia, China And Iran Targeting U.S. Election

group "Zirconium." Microsoft reported evidence of "thousands" of attempted attacks by the group between May and September, with nearly 150 successful compromises. Among the individuals targeted unsuccessfully by Zirconium were Biden campaign staffers. The group went after non-campaign emails. Zirconium also targeted an unnamed former Trump administration official, along with individuals in the international affairs community, including those at 15 universities and groups such as the Atlantic Council and the Stimson Center. "Zirconium, operating from China, has attempted to gain intelligence on organizations associated with the upcoming U.S. presidential election," Burt wrote. Additionally, Microsoft has observed continued attempts by Iranian cyber threat group "Phosphorus" to target the personal accounts of Trump campaign staffers. Phosphorus stepped up efforts between May and June to access personal or work email accounts of the staffers.



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

The assessment by Microsoft was published a month after a senior official at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence put out a statement warning that Russia, China and Iran were actively taking steps to interfere in the U.S. presidential election, with Russian actors favoring Trump, and Chinese and Iranian groups favoring Biden.

A spokesperson for the Biden campaign did not respond to The Hill's request for comment on Microsoft's findings.

Thea McDonald, deputy national press secretary for the Trump campaign, told The Hill that it was "not surprising" that foreign groups were targeting the organization.

"As President Trump's re-election campaign, we are a large target, so it is not surprising to see malicious activity directed at the campaign or our staff," McDonald said. "We work closely with our partners, Microsoft and others, to mitigate these threats. We take cybersecurity very seriously and do not publicly comment on our efforts."

mending steps groups can take to counter foreign cyberattacks targeting email systems, emphasizing the need for organizations with ties to elections to take additional security measures.

"Malicious cyber actors have been known to use sophisticated phishing operations to target political parties and campaigns, think tanks, civic organizations, and associated actors," CISA wrote. "Email systems are the preferred vector for initiating malicious cyber operations."

Acting DHS Secretary Chad Wolf said in a statement Thursday that Microsoft's assessment "reaffirms" previous DHS communications on election security threats.

"Protecting our elections is a team effort with the federal government and the private sector joining together to thwart foreign malign actors," Wolf said. "Today's announcement from Microsoft reaffirms my statements in the recent State of the Homeland Address: China, Iran, and Russia are trying to undermine our democracy and influence our elections."

"I applaud Microsoft's efforts to defend democracy against these attacks and for their transparency on this critical issue," he added. Several key members of Congress reacted strongly to the news of the attempted cyberattacks, including Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.), the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, a panel that conducted a bipartisan years-long investigation into Russian interference during the 2016 presidential election.



"In Beijing, Chairman Xi wants Biden to win; in Moscow, Vladimir Putin wants Trump to win; both of these miserable SOB's have the same goal of turning Americans against each other," Sasse said. "The United States needs to make it clear that China and Russia will face severe consequences for hacks and disinformation campaigns. Chinese communists and Russian oligarchs don't get to vote in America's elections."

Burt wrote that Microsoft made its findings public because the company believes "it's important the world knows about threats to democratic processes."

He also urged Congress to appropriate more federal funds to help campaigns and election officials defend against malicious cyber actors. Congress has appropriated over \$800 million for election security since 2018 in addition to the \$400 million included in the CARES Act stimulus bill in March to help address challenges to elections posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Election officials and experts have argued a further \$3.6 billion is needed to adequately meet the needs of state and local election officials. Democrats and Republicans have butted heads over the funds, with Democrats including \$3.6 billion for elections in the House-passed HEROES Act stimulus bill, while Republicans have not included any funds for elections in recent proposed stimulus bills, citing concerns around federalizing elections.

"As election security experts have noted, additional funding is still needed, especially as resources are stretched to accommodate the shift in COVID-19-related voting," Burt wrote. "We encourage Congress to move forward with additional funding to the states and provide them with what they need to protect the vote and ultimately our democracy." (Courtesy thehill.com)



Microsoft previously put out an alert last year warning of attempts by Phosphorus to target an unnamed U.S. presidential campaign, which Reuters later reported was the Trump campaign. Microsoft took legal action against the group prior to this, filing a court case enabling the company to take control of 99 websites used by Phosphorus to conduct hacking operations. Burt noted that the majority of the attempted cyberattacks by all three groups were unsuccessful, and that all those whose accounts were targeted or compromised had been notified.



The Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) put out a report on Thursday recom-

Editor's Choice



Smoke rises from Beirut's port area, Lebanon. REUTERS/Alaa Kanaan



The Tribute In Light shines above the skyline of lower Manhattan on the eve of the 19th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, as seen from Jersey City. REUTERS/Mike Segar



Kansas City Chiefs defensive end Alex Okafor kneels for the national anthem before the game against the Houston Texans at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City. Denny Medley-USA TODAY Sports



Air Force One is seen as U.S. President Donald Trump speaks during a campaign event at MBS International Airport, in Freeland, Michigan. REUTERS/Jonathan Ernst



A man uses a water hose to put out the remains of a fire that broke out at Beirut's port yesterday, in Lebanon. REUTERS/Aziz Taher



A climate activist shows her hand as she sits inside a police van after being detained during an Extinction Rebellion protest in London, Britain. REUTERS/Simon Dawson



A man wearing a protective mask walks in between parked passenger buses after authorities announced a complete lockdown for two days this week in the West Bengal state, amidst due to the the spread of coronavirus, in Kolkata, India. REUTERS/Rupak De..



A Southwest Airlines plane flies amid an orange color haze from nearby wildfires as it prepares to land at Oakland International Airport in Oakland, California. REUTERS/Adrees Latif

Genetically Engineered Mosquitoes Are Approved To Be Released Into Harris County Beginning In 2021

EPA Approves The Release Of GMO Mosquitoes In Harris County



Genetically modified mosquitoes approved for release by EPA in Harris County.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

HOUSTON - A project involving the release of millions of genetically modified mosquitoes beginning in 2021 has been approved by federal authorities, and Harris County is one area in which the pilot program could go forward, according to a report by CNN.

Oxitec, the US-owned, British-based company that developed the engineered species, announced the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) granted the company an experimental use permit (EUP) to field test the use of genetically engineered Aedes aegypti mosquitoes. The company's aim through the test is to protect public health from mosquito-borne illnesses. According to CNN, "the genetically engineered mosquito, named OX5034, has been altered to produce female offspring that die in the larval stage, well before hatching and growing large enough to bite and spread disease."



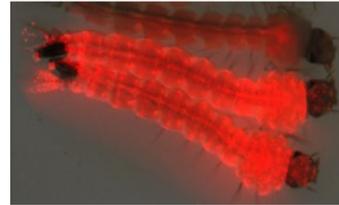
Mosquito larvae

"The EUP is designed to test the effectiveness of genetically engineered Aedes aegypti mosquitoes as a way to reduce mosquito populations in a controlled environment with appropriate safeguards as a first step to potentially wider use in the United States," the statement reads. The genetically engineered mosquitoes are approved to be released into Harris County beginning in 2021. To go forward with this pilot program, state and local approval would be needed, but that's not yet been granted, according to Harris County Public Health's Sam Bissett. "Local health officials confirm that there is no agreement in place or plans to move forward with the project at this time," Bissett said. "Our focus is on our efforts with the Covid-19 pandemic."

The planned release in Florida is not without controversy, with local residents and a coalition of environmental advocacy groups speaking out.

Related

Hundreds of millions of genetically modified mosquitoes are set to be released in Florida and possibly Harris County. Recently, the United States Environmental Protection Agency approved two locations to release 750-million genetically-modified mosquitoes if also given state and local support. According to Meredith Fensom, a spokesperson from Oxitec, local support has been approved in Florida but not yet Harris County.



"Believe it or not, we have been releasing our mosquitoes for 10 years," said Fensom. "This would be the first project in the United States. We've been working in other countries with great results." According to Oxitec, their company engineers genetically modified male mosquitoes with sabotaging DNA. When these GMO mosquitoes mate with females, the genes pass-on and kill female offspring before they reach adulthood.

Stopping Zika: The GMO mosquito that kills his own offspring

Approved by the Environment Protection Agency in May, the pilot project is designed to test if a genetically modified mosquito is a viable alternative to spraying insecticides to control the Aedes aegypti. It's a species of mosquito that carries several deadly diseases, such as Zika, dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever. The mosquito, named OX5034, has been altered to produce female offspring that die in the larval stage, well before hatching and growing large enough to bite and spread disease. Only the female mosquito bites for blood, which she needs to mature her eggs. Males feed only on nectar, and are thus not a carrier for disease.

The mosquito also won federal approval to be released into Harris County, Texas, beginning in 2021, according to Oxitec, the US-owned, British-based company that developed the genetically modified organism (GMO). The Environmental Protection Agency granted Oxitec's request after years of investigating the impact of the genetically altered mosquito on human and environmental health.



"This is an exciting development because it represents the ground-breaking work of hundreds of passionate people over more than a decade in multiple countries, all of whom want to protect communities from dengue, Zika, yellow fever, and other vector-borne diseases," Oxitec CEO Grey Frandsen said in a statement at the time. However, state and local approval for the Texas release has not been granted, said Sam Bissett, a communication specialist with Harris County Public Health. "Local health officials confirm that there is no agreement in place or plans to move forward with the project at this time," Bissett told CNN. "Our focus is on our efforts with the Covid-19 pandemic."

"In fairly short order, you have a population crash, because there are no females to mate with," said Fensom.



A genetically modified mosquito.

The company targets non-native Aedes Aegypti mosquitoes, known for carrying potentially deadly viruses such as Chikungunya, Yellow Fever, and the Zika Virus. "When we've worked in other countries like Brazil, sometimes in just 6 months, we've been able to reduce the disease-carrying mosquito population by about 95 percent," said Fensom. While some people are excited about the possibility, others remain hesitant.

ed about the possibility, others remain hesitant. "With all the urgent crises facing our nation and the State of Florida — the COVID-19 pandemic, racial injustice, climate change — the administration has used tax dollars and government resources for a Jurassic Park experiment. Now the Monroe County Mosquito Control District has given the final permission needed. What could possibly go wrong? We don't know, because EPA unlawfully refused to seriously analyze environmental risks, now without further review of the risks, the experiment can proceed," said Jaydee Hanson, Policy Director for the International Center for Technology Assessment and Center for Food Safety. "We're not spraying chemicals," said Fensom. "There are no harmful chemicals in the environment. Beneficial insects like bees and butterflies are unharmed."



While the EPA has given Oxitec to release millions of their mosquitoes in Florida and Harris County, local support is still needed before they fly around Houston. A spokesperson from Harris County Public Health provided the written response below.

"At this time there are no agreements or approval in place for Harris County to work with Oxitec in 2021," said Samuel Bissett from HCPH. "While we have had discussions with Oxitec previously about a potential partnership with Harris County Public Health, those discussions were paused last year between both sides. The EPA's release from earlier this year regarding approval of this initiative detailed that they'll be able to operate in Monroe County and Harris County if approved by state and local authorities. That is not the case for Harris County at this time. If things change, we'll let our residents and partners know immediately, but Oxitec's primary focus is launching the Monroe County program and our focus is on our efforts with the COVID-19 pandemic." (Courtesy click2houston)

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