



What are debris flows?

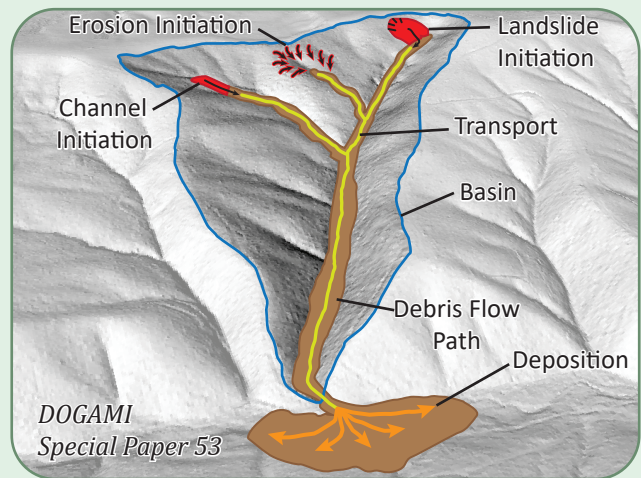
Debris flows are a type of landslide that commonly occur during periods of intense rainfall. They can travel long distances, are fast moving, and dangerous.

How do wildfires contribute?

Wildfires remove vegetation and alter soils, increasing the severity and number of debris flows for many years after the burn.



Anatomy of a debris flow



Initiation

Debris flows can initiate in several different ways, usually in or adjacent to channels.

Transport

Once in the channel, the soil, rocks, large woody debris and water become a slurry with the consistency of wet cement. As it moves down the channel it grows in volume and speed, reaching up to 35 mph.

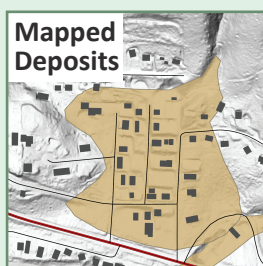
Deposition

When debris flows reach the mouth of the channel or flatter ground, the material spreads out and can severely impact developed areas such as houses and roads.

How do we understand risk from debris flows?

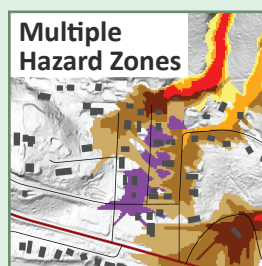
Past Debris Flows

Historic events and deposits are identified using aerial imagery and lidar. Areas that have had debris flows in the past are more likely to experience future events.



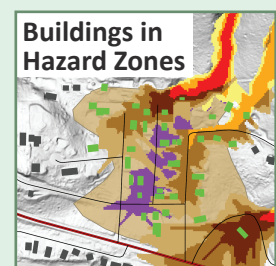
Future Debris Flows

Debris flow hazard zones are developed using a model calibrated by these historic events and mapped deposits. Zones consider multiple characteristics, including size and estimated return period.

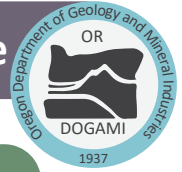


Societal Risk

The risk of debris flow impacts to residents, buildings, and roads is assessed using the hazard zones and mapped deposits.



DOGAMI OFR O-25-09: Debris Flow Risk after the Beachie-Lionshead Fire



Beachie Creek & Lionshead Wildfires

The Beachie Creek and Lionshead “megafires” occurred in August 2020 along Highway 22 in Marion and Linn Counties, Oregon. They left an already debris flow-prone landscape barren and more susceptible to future debris flows.



FEMA

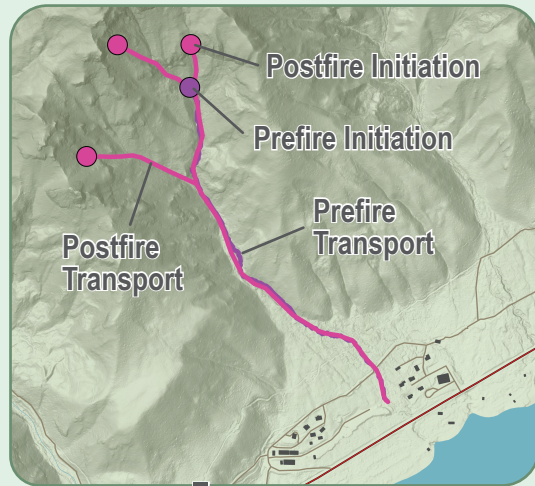
DOGAMI was provided funding by FEMA in 2021 to map historic debris flows, model future hazard areas, analyze risk, and develop a road map to risk reduction with the impacted communities for four fires: Beachie Creek-Lionshead, Holiday Farm, Archie Creek, and Eagle Creek (FEMA Grant # EMS-2021-CA-00011).



What have we found out?

Pre & postfire debris flow frequency

The average annual rate of debris flows in the Beachie-Lionshead study area increased by ~3 times after the 2020 wildfires.



People and buildings at risk from future debris flows

The risk of a debris flow reaching a given location varies depending on the severity of the event (volume of material, travel speed, and extent of deposit). We modeled three escalating inundation zones, described below. The study area contains 6,146 buildings (3,186 are residential) and 6,762 permanent residents.

Hazard Zone (How often a hazard of that size is likely to occur)	Number of buildings and people exposed (at risk)
Typical (10s to 100s of years)	43 45
Intermediate (100s of years)	130 144
Extreme (100s to 1,000s of years)	233 256

More common
Smaller impact



Less common
Larger impact

Before a storm

1. Become familiar with the land around you. Identify if you live, work, or travel in potential debris flow zones. See new DOGAMI maps and/or hire a certified engineering geologist to evaluate your property.
2. Establish evacuation routes and practice. A storm could happen at night!
3. Contact your local emergency manager to learn more about preparing for an emergency.



Be prepared!

During an extreme storm

1. Stay alert. Watch the weather.
2. Be ready to evacuate. Listen for unusual sounds and watch for changes to any stream channels around you.
3. Heed alerts from emergency officials.

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Learn more about landslides in Oregon at www.oregon.gov/dogami/landslide