

**SMITH Sharon R**

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**To:** GRAY, Terry  
**Cc:** EAST REGION CSM  
**Subject:** FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT

Thought I would share this information with all of you in case you came up with the same questions.

**Background:** Terry asked for some research into an issue with a customer having to purchase T-plates each fire season, to fight forest fires, then at the conclusion of fire season turned in the T-plates and had to purchase regular passenger plates.

**Question:** Why was the customer required to purchase T-plates and register for the additional weight for fire fighting when OR803.03 exempts emergency fire apparatus providing public fire protection for the State of Oregon.

Terry Brown, Equip. Specialist, Portland US Forest Service Office, returned my call. His concern is that the lease that people sign with the Forest Service for fighting fire allows the Forest Service to send the equipment/crews to other States. Specifically, to Washington as well as other states including Idaho and California.

Mr. Brown has verified with Washington State Police that Washington does not have an exemption for fire fighting equipment and that their law requires all vehicles that travel on their highways be licensed or trip permitted.

An example of what can happen involves one incident last year when a unit dispatched to Montana, was stopped at the Idaho border for a weight violation and the unit was required to dump the load before proceeding to the fire location. This caused a lot controversy with those involved.

So because these folks may end up operating in states which do not have the same exemption as Oregon, it saves a lot of citations and headaches by having the T-plate on the vehicle. Usually the dispatching is on short notice and would not allow for time to come in and get plates or permits, which would cover the vehicle (again maybe not in all states the person is sent)

The customer does have a choice of different type program with the Forest Service that does not involve a lease, but it is less likely that people on this list will be called to fight fire.

If, at some future time, surrounding states implement the same exemption that Oregon has, the requirement for T-plates might change until then vehicles need to meet the other states' requirements.

Terry, I hope this answers your question, if you have other questions concerning this please contact me.

Sharon