

EMCEE: *[First Responder of the Year]*

Tonight, our award winner is not your typical First Responder! This year's winner reflects thinking outside the box and is an indication of our digital world. They represent the difference each of us can make every day for our community members and our men and women fighting for us!

Being a small town surrounded by oak forests on the west side and expansive wheat fields on the east side puts The Dalles in a scenic location... and right on the wildland fire interface. This is a common situation for most communities all along the shores of the beautiful Columbia Gorge.

As fire seasons have recently become more intense and deadly, the need for accurate, timely information on fast-moving fires has become critical for residents. That's when the idea for a centralized site for fire information was born. Previously, fire agencies had been creating separate Facebook pages for each fire, and often, residents didn't know what to look for online to find the most current information.

As a result, in 2015, a regional resource was created on Facebook that has since bloomed to nearly 23,000 followers and now offers a 1-stop-shop for rapid updates to information about fire locations, resources, size, weather, threatened structures, and evacuation notices across the entire region.

This site has now become THE trusted go-to resource on fire information. Aided by a cadre of around 12 volunteers listening to scanners, reviewing fire agency and first responder Twitter and Facebook feeds, weather forecasts, lightning warnings, wind reports, and GPS locations. This page has become a critical resource informing not just citizens but even firefighters out in the field, by providing nearly instantaneous updates as each new piece of information becomes available.

The initial founder of the group, Mack Lamb, a former fire boss, is a humble man, and always put his team in the spotlight, refusing to take credit for himself. Similarly, Darlisa Black is always working late into the night gathering as much information for critical post updates. Combined, the two have created an amazing resource that has earned the trust of the community and first responders.

Tonight, we are proud to honor and celebrate the many hours, tireless passion, and drive of Mack Lamb and Darlisa Black, who are the co-founders of our 2021 Outstanding First Responder of the Year, **Columbia Gorge Wildland & Fire Information Page**.