

New Smokey Bear statue makes its debut in Bend

From Bend.com news sources

May 13, 2003 - Bears are springing up all across central Oregon. Not black bears. Not grizzlies. Smokey Bears -- fire preventin' bears. Bears carrying shovels and wearing campaign hats. The current outbreak of Smokeys was started by Gary Marshall, fire marshal for the City of Bend Fire Department, about two years ago. "When the city moved into its new fire stations, it wanted good-looking fire danger signs that would add to the design of the stations."

The city's fire stations are impressive, elegant structures that employ huge timbers, native stone, sweeping expanses of glass, and acres of steeply pitched metal roofing. They're buildings that look like they belong in the deep woods, someplace that gets a lot of snow. And lots of wildfires. Someplace like Bend, Oregon.

"Some people asked, 'Why Smokey? Why not Sparky?'" said Marshall. "We live in a wildland/urban interface area, so we wanted to use the nation's most recognizable wildland fire-prevention icon, which is Smokey." But they didn't want just any old Smokey -- some two-dimensional plywood cutout bear that wobbles every time a car passes by. They wanted a three-dimensional Smokey. A life-size, full-relief stand-up-and-get-noticed bear that would wobble the eyeballs of anyone that passed by.

Problem was, there weren't any off-the-rack 3-D Smokeys to be had. If the City of Bend wanted three-dimensional bears, it was going to have to make them. Susie Lovisco, one of the city's fire inspectors, was given the job of finding somebody to make the city four life-size, wood-carved Smokeys. Lovisco went to Penny Eddington at Display Dynamics, a local company which makes get-noticed signs for businesses and head-turning displays for trade shows.

Eddington took the challenge, but talked Lovisco out of making wooden bears. "Not only were they going to be expensive," said Lovisco, "but Penny said they may not hold up over time. Painting and maintenance would be a constant headache." "We would have had to hand-carve four bears for four stations," recalled Eddington, adding that fiberglass would create a nicer-looking Smokey than a wooden one. It would also have better detail and be longer lasting. The City of Bend was given permission to use the likeness of Smokey in their statues by Rick Gibson, who is the Oregon Department of Forestry's fire policy section manager as well as the state coordinator for all things related to Smokey Bear.

Getting official permission to use Smokey's image was an essential step. Smokey's image and use are tightly controlled. He's the property of the USDA Forest Service, the National Association of State Foresters, and the Advertising Council. He's even got federal legislation, the "Smokey Bear Act," that says failure to get permission for Smokey's use will cost you \$250, and maybe six months in jail. To ensure consistency in all uses, there's the Smokey Bear style guide, which includes the official rules and regulations for the bear, whether he

appears in print or on the street. It describes how he shall be dressed, the color of his pants, and the acceptable range for his expressions. Drawings and clip art of Smokey were delivered to Display Dynamics by Pete Martin, a fire prevention specialist with the Prineville District of the Bureau of Land Management. Martin also had the job of approving the artwork to ensure the quality and accuracy of the new Smokey statue. Display Dynamics turned the job of making the model over to sculptor Gregg Lacy. Soon, a bear rose from the clay and Lacy's model was approved for the final statue.

"The face was changed a couple of times during the sculpturing process," said Eddington, "but, basically, the original art was the final." SAFECO Insurance donated \$5,500 for making the mold and Deschutes County Rural Fire District #2 paid for the four Smokey statues that were going to be placed in front of the fire stations. A fiberglass-molding plant in Los Angeles was tabbed for making the statues, and Lacy's model was shipped to Southern California. The statues then returned to Lacy for painting. Final touches were done by Display Dynamics. The statues are six feet tall, two feet wide at the shoulders, and strong. A steel structure inside Smokey reinforces the rigid fiberglass shell that composes his body. The paint is protected by an industrial-strength ultraviolet light-resistant clearcoat. "It's the same finish product used by the surfboard industry," said Eddington. "It'll hold up to the elements." The first of the new Smokey statues was unveiled during a ceremony at the Bend Fire Department's main station. The day was August 9, 2002, and it was Smokey Bear's 58th birthday. Visitors from throughout the city came to honor Smokey, eat a slice of birthday cake, and have their photographs taken beside the venerable fire-preventin' bear.

"Kids were all over him," said Eddington. Clearly, Smokey remained a beloved character to people, young and old. A couple of months later, the new Smokey statue was on display during a meeting of fire prevention and education professionals in Sunriver, a resort community south of Bend. One of the attendees, Lew Southard, the Forest Service's branch chief of fire prevention, was impressed. "There are some wood-carved Smokeys out there," said Southard, "but nothing like this, life-size and made from fiberglass."

"I encouraged Penny to proceed with getting it licensed," Southard added. Being a Smokey license-holder makes one a part of a small group of individuals and businesses who may produce, distribute, market and sell educational products using Smokey's image. Applications are sent to Cambridge Consulting Corporation, the firm which manages Smokey licenses for the Forest Service, the National Association of State Foresters, and the Ad Council. Only about half of the applicants become license-holders, said Southard. Today, there are "about 50" license-holders who produce and sell hundreds of Smokey Bear products, from baseball caps to yo-yos. The only limitation, Southard told Eddington, is to "keep the product within the confines of the fire prevention arena." This didn't seem to be a problem, said Eddington. Word of the life-size Smokey had quickly gotten around in the fire prevention community, and she'd received calls of inquiry from Alaska, North Carolina and California. Currently, eleven Smokey Bear statues exist -- the four in the hands of the Bend Fire Department, six

purchased by the Oregon Department of Forestry, and one which stands in the showroom of Display Dynamics. The Department of Forestry plans to have a Smokey in front of three of its district offices (Prineville, West Lane and Tillamook), and three for mobile displays. Keep Oregon Green Association has one of the mobile Smokeys, as does the World Forestry Center in Portland (this bear will eventually make its home at the new Tillamook Forest Interpretive Center, scheduled to open in 2005).

Display Dynamics hopes to have its license application approved soon. Thereafter, six-foot-tall Smokeys may be popping up in front of fire stations and forestry offices from coast to coast. Until then, these unique Smokeys are found only in the urban wildlands of central Oregon. "Central Oregon is a leader in interagency cooperation," said Lovisco. "Wildland and structural fire protection agencies here work hand-in-hand on suppression and prevention. In our department, we have firefighters trained to work in the wildland environment, and we incorporate Smokey's message with our other fire prevention and life safety messages." "Smokey projects so much more than the fire prevention message," said Marshall, noting that Smokey's message often includes the point that "a healthy forest is a fire-resistant forest." In an environmentally conscious community like Bend, a bear like Smokey fits right in. "Smokey inspires people," said Marshall.
