

Costs of train derailment adding up

VANCOUVER, Wash. (AP) — Six months after a train hauling Bakken crude oil derailed along the Columbia River Gorge, Washington, Oregon and other officials are still tabulating a bill to send to Union Pacific Railroad.

Union Pacific said in a statement that it is committed to absorbing all the costs incurred as a result of the fiery crash on June 3 in Mosier, Oregon.

The railroad is not required to disclose costs associated with its cleanup efforts or how much its insurance policy will cover, *The Columbian* newspaper reported. But an email obtained by the newspaper shows the railroad has estimated its costs associated with the derailment at about \$8.9 million.

The railroad reported \$1.7 million in equipment damage and \$176,811 in track damage to the Federal Railroad Administration, with the remaining millions for response and remediation costs.

Meanwhile, an intergovernmental group made up of officials with Mosier city, the fire district and a school foundation is currently in negotiations with the railroad over compensation and other issues.

William Gary, a Portland-based attorney working with that Mosier group, declined to say what kind of compensation the government agencies are seeking. "We are in a confidential mediation at the moment," Gary said. "We're working with the railroad to resolve a host of fairly complicated issues."

Three Oregon agencies that responded to the newspaper's request for information, including the Department of Environmental Quality, say they're seeking a total of nearly \$400,000 in reimbursement costs. Those numbers could increase.

The Environmental Protection Agency's bill is at \$340,000, the newspaper reported.

And two Washington agencies that responded to the derailment are billing the railroad \$66,000 next month, a Department of Ecology spokeswoman said.

Sixteen tanker cars that went off the tracks in June held 448,000 gallons of oil,

but only 47,000 gallons leaked. Much of that went into a wastewater treatment unit, avoiding a more difficult river cleanup.

There remain unanswered questions, however, such as the degree to which the river was effected and what long-term effects there could be on the groundwater and soil.

Following the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska waters in 1989, Congress passed the Oil Pollution Act in 1990. That law requires polluters pay for cleanup, remediation and response costs; they must have insurance and the funds to cover the cleanup.

To address the growing risks of oil movement through the state, the Washington Legislature in 2015 passed a law that will soon require railroads hauling crude oil to demonstrate the ability to pay damages in the event of a spill.

They will also be required to share information about the type of oil and the volume with the state and first responders. California and Minnesota have similar laws for railroads hauling crude, according to Washington's Department of Ecology. But Oregon does not have such a law.

Teen's death inspires story

By Alisha Roemeling
The Register-Guard

EUGENE (AP) — Jamie Heizelman wishes she would have known that her 15-year-old grandson, Brandon Kimble, was so distraught, but no one came forward. By the time she learned that the boy she called "Honeybear" was feeling suicidal, he was already gone.

"He was so funny, he was a wonderful person, everyone in that school and the surrounding communities loved him," Heizelman said Wednesday. "Florence, Mapleton, Chemult, Brickerville, Deadwood — this baby was loved everywhere."

Brandon, a Mapleton High School freshman and football player, hanged himself in his bedroom closet on the night of Dec. 1. Heizelman said she woke up around 3 a.m., and found the boy. His concerned black Labrador, Choco, was with him. Police later told Heizelman that Brandon had been dead for several hours.

Heizelman is determined to create awareness about teen suicide in her community and around the state. She said the image of her grandson's heartbreaking death will not outweigh all of the "perfect memories" she has of him.

"I just want to make people aware so that if someone

is talking about this (suicide), please tell someone so they can get help," Heizelman said. "Even if you don't think they're going to do it, please tell someone."

Heizelman said police found evidence on Brandon's phone and Facebook that he had shared with some of his friends that he was thinking about killing himself.

He even went as far as to send a photo of himself with a belt around his neck to at least one friend before he died.

"If someone would have tried to tell me he was feeling like this, I could have done something," Heizelman said. "But I had no idea. At home, with me, he seemed happy."

Heizelman has arranged for a representative from Lines for Life to speak at Kimble's memorial service, which will take place in the school gym on Friday.

Lines for Life is a non-profit organization that helps prevent substance abuse and suicide, as well as promote mental health.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for people between the ages of 10 and 34 in Oregon, according to the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention.

Mapleton School District Superintendent Jodi O'Mara said Wednesday that several counselors were made

available to students at the high school the day after Brandon died, and that at least one counselor will be available at the school for several more days. District staff also participated in a grief training session Wednesday, which provided staff with ways to communicate with students and provide support for them after a suicide.

"This is something we need to talk about and not shy away from," O'Mara said. "As educators we often talk about outside threats to students, and how students may hurt one another. But what we really don't address is the threat of students hurting themselves, and it's a conversation we all need to be having."

About 50 students attend Mapleton High. O'Mara said Brandon was well-known among his peers and within the small community.

He was a wide receiver for the Mapleton Sailors football team. He was the 2016 homecoming prince.

Heizelman said that she had raised her grandson, the eldest of three children, for most of his life. His mother was 16 when the boy was born. Heizelman said Brandon's parents didn't provide a good environment for the child, and they gave her custody of her grandson at a young age.



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