

# OSP probe: Bend officer violated rules

BEND (AP) — An Oregon State Police investigation has found that a police corporal in Central Oregon violated department policy by illegally running a red light before striking a truck, a pedestrian and a doughnut shop earlier this year.

*The Bulletin* reports that Bend Police Chief Jim Porter says the state police investigation shows Cpl. Robert Emerson violated both department policy and state law, but that the crash was one mistake in an otherwise exemplary career.

“Our investigation found that he was in violation of our vehicle operation policies,” Porter said. “Furthermore, a circuit court judge found that he violated state law. So there’s no doubt that on that day he was in violation of policy and state law, and that he made a mistake. There is absolutely no doubt about that.”

Emerson was cited after the March 5 crash and paid a \$260 fine. Emerson collided with a pickup truck, slid across an intersection, hit a pedestrian and smashed into the Dough Nut shop, Oregon State Police said. No shop employees or customers were injured. Both Emerson and the pedestrian were taken to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

Emerson had been on duty for about an hour at the time of the crash and was the supervisor of four other on-duty officers. A report of a stolen vehicle that had fled police had come in just before the crash. In a written statement, Emerson told state police that he believed the driver of the stolen vehicle was impaired and he wanted to get in front of the driver to deploy spike strips.

Data from Emerson’s squad car computer show he was traveling 66 mph in

a 35 mph zone with lights and sirens on for 1.5 seconds before he T-boned a green 1997 Chevrolet truck.

Porter said Emerson made a mistake, but he was an otherwise exemplary officer with eight citizen commendations and 10 internal commendations over his 13-year career. Porter said this is Emerson’s only violation.

“In his zeal to apprehend suspects he could have been more alert to his situation. His intent was to try and arrest felons, not to try and better a personal agenda.” — Jim Porter

“In his zeal to apprehend suspects he could have been more alert to his situation,” Porter said. “His intent was to try and arrest felons, not to try and better a personal agenda.”

Emerson declined to comment. He was convicted of his traffic signal violation and has since filed an appeal of the decision.

# Commentary... Through the eyes of a newcomer

By Steve Kadel  
Correspondent

For many years, I considered Sisters simply a place with slow traffic to get past on the way to one trailhead or another. I drove through town several times while living in Portland and later from the opposite direction as a Klamath Falls resident.

I admit, I barely noticed the town, as attractive as it’s always been. My limited view changed, fortunately, when I moved to the area last summer. Yes, I was once again drawn by the magnificent landscape with all its hiking, backpacking and climbing options — my passion.

But having taken time to get acquainted with the town itself, I’ve learned there are lots of interesting people and activities. It’s pleasant to walk the streets visiting the shops, which are attractive and invariably capture me longer than I’d intended. I also like that the town is dog-friendly and many store owners invite well-mannered pooches inside their establishments.

I’ve also learned that community arts events go beyond the well-known quilt festival and folk festival. It was surprising to find out that little Sisters supports an ambitious local theater group — Silent Echo Theater Company — spearheaded by president Marla Manning.

As Sisters School

District correspondent for *The Nugget*, I’ve met many dedicated and hard-working teachers and administrators. That’s not unusual for Oregon public schools, although having a Flight Science curriculum that partners with Sisters Eagle Airport isn’t something I’ve seen before. Program instructor Sheryl Yeager just happened to be nearby when the job was advertised and she just happened to have her pilot’s license. Yeager’s students can work toward a pilot’s license, too.

It says a lot about the community that voters approved a \$10.7 million bond for school upgrades in May. That was one of the first things I heard after coming to town, and it gave me a positive view of Sisters right away.

When people find out I’m a newcomer, they invariably suggest some local person who I should meet, whether they’re a “character” or someone who’s been around a long time and has helped shape the town. People seem free with praise for their fellow residents, and the number of people who’ve accomplished big things elsewhere in business, government or other fields is impressive. So is the fact that they eventually succumbed to the more quiet charm of Sisters, which combines the best of Old West flavor with New West amenities such as craft beers.

I get the feeling that

Sisters has a heart. People here seem to sincerely care about others, and it’s more than mere words. One of those I met in 2016 is Erik Himbert, the 38-year-old man who won a national contest by designing a wheelchair that allows the user to stand up for periods of time, which has health benefits as well as giving chair users more mobility.

Himbert could probably market the chair and make some good money, but that’s not his style. Instead, he wants to make it available to people at a modest cost so it can improve lives. That’s a refreshing attitude these days.

Despite all of the above, location is still big for me. Sisters is so well situated among the Cascades that there’s no limit to outdoor recreation choices. My first summer here took me to Black Crater, Camp Lake, Golden Lake, Jefferson Park, Black Butte and Tam McArthur Rim, among other places. And there’s so much left to explore.

When I lived in Alaska, the joke was that residents were in a state of perpetual self-congratulations simply for being there. We could feel the same way about Sisters.

I hope everyone reading this will have an enjoyable and fulfilling 2017. I’m looking forward to seeing you around town or on the trails.

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