

O P I N I O N

National Weather Service Alert – Hydrological Forecast

The National Weather Service is predicting warmer temperatures, rising snow levels and periods of rain to much of the area beginning Tuesday night and lasting through at least Thursday. Snow levels will rise to between 6,500 and 8,500 feet Tuesday night through Wednesday. Below these snow levels expect periods of rain, moderate at times, with the first batch moving through from Tuesday night through Wednesday night. Another system will bring additional rain and higher-elevation snow from late Thursday night through Friday night. Precipitation amounts through Thursday are expected to range from one-quarter to three-quarters of an inch over the lower basins of Central Oregon. Expect between 1 to 2 inches, with locally as much as 3 inches of precipitation along the east slopes of the Oregon Cascades.

These precipitation amounts will combine with the aforementioned warmer temperatures and high snow levels to create some hydrologic concerns. Much of the rain should initially be absorbed within the snow pack, but eventually this will begin to melt, especially in the lower elevations. This rain on snow scenario will add additional weight to already stressed buildings and roofs in locations that currently have a deep snowpack. The potential impacts from the snowmelt and rainfall runoff include ponding of water where storm drains or ditches are clogged with snow and ice, ponding of water in low-lying areas with poor drainage or frozen ground, possible ice jams on small creeks and rivers that have frozen over.

While no major river flooding is forecast at this time, this is an evolving situation and should be monitored regularly for updates.

Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

Perhaps because I am a builder, I've been asked by several people if I thought it necessary to have snow shoveled off their roof. My initial response was "look: I'm not an engineer, I have no idea." Then I asked them how many residential structures they know of in the past 50 years that have failed due to snow loads? This may have relieved their minds, but I continued to fret if I was giving out poor advice.

We've all heard about the gym roof failure in Bend, and some of you may be aware of the horse arena collapse on Goodrich Rd. These were long-span structures with no pitch or shallow-pitched roofs. But it got me thinking—and talking to my structural engineer.

Residential structures in Deschutes County are required by code to have a minimum live/snow load capacity of 25 pounds per square foot. But how much does a one-square-foot-column of snow actually weigh? Obviously the answer depends on depth and moisture content.

Turns out that as of Saturday, in Tollgate,

on undisturbed ground the snow measured 30 inches deep. When melted down a one-foot-square column of snow 30 inches high produced 3.4 gallons of water. That water weighed 28.5 pounds — several pounds over code design load.

But aren't there safety factors built into the design load? (I was searching for an excuse not to shovel my roof). Yes, there are, but this was my engineers response:

"The safety factor is a tricky deal and there is no specific number we use. If you can get weight off your roof down to the design snow load, that is the best option."

So I decided to shovel snow off the roof over my garage and kitchen, as those are the areas that rely on longer span trusses. I'm not worrying about the rest of the house because interior walls keep the simple-beam spans more "reasonable."

I hope this helps some of you decide what might be needed on your homes to increase the margin of safety — or simply sleep better at night.

Kris Calvin

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Rain 43/27	Chance rain/snow 37/28	Rain likely 38/25	Chance snow 36/23	Chance snow 35/18	Chance snow 35/na

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Robert B. Reich

American Voices

Tyrants don't allow open questioning, and they hate the free press. They want total control.

That's why, according to three senior officials on the transition team, the incoming Trump administration is considering evicting the White House press corps from the press room inside the White House and moving them—and news conferences—to a conference center or to the old Executive Office Building.

This may sound like a small logistic matter. It's not. The White House press room contains work stations and broadcast booths, and the briefing area for presidential news conferences. Reporters have had workspace at the White House since Teddy Roosevelt was president, in 1902.

But we're in a new era, the reign of King Trump.

Sean Spicer, Trump's press secretary, acknowledges "there has been some discussion about how" to move the press out of the White House. Spicer says it's because the new administration would like a larger room to allow more members of the press to attend press conferences.

Rubbish. It's because a larger room would allow the administration to fill seats with "alt-right" fringe journalists, right-wing social media, Trump supporters and paid staffers. They'd be there to ask the questions Trump wants to answer, and to jeer at reporters who ask critical questions, and to applaud Trump's answers.

The move would allow Trump to play the crowd.

That's exactly what happened at Trump's so-called "news conference" on Jan. 11. It wasn't really a press conference at all, and shouldn't have been characterized as one. It was a fake news conference that took place in a large auditorium.

In the audience were paid staffers who jeered and snickered when reporters asked critical questions, and cheered every time Trump delivered one of his campaign zingers. It could easily have been one of his rallies.

In this carnival atmosphere it was easy for Trump

to refuse to answer questions from reporters who have run stories he doesn't like, and from news outlets that have criticized him.

He slammed CNN for dispensing "fake news," called BuzzFeed "a pile of garbage," and sarcastically called the BBC "another beauty." The audience loved it.

Just as he did in his rallies, Trump continued calling the press "dishonest" — part of his ongoing effort to discredit the press and to reduce public confidence in it.

And he repeatedly lied. But the media in attendance weren't allowed to follow up or to question him on his lies.

Trump asserted at his fake news conference that "I have no deals that could happen in Russia, because we've stayed away. And I have no loans with Russia."

Wrong again. Trump repeatedly sought deals in Russia. In a 2008 speech, Donald Trump Jr. said, "Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets," and "we see a lot of money pouring in from Russia."

Trump's statements at his fake news conference were, and are, big lies. At the very least, they should have been followed up with questions from the White House press corps. That would have happened at a real news conference.

Which is the danger of evicting the press from the White House and putting press conferences into a large auditorium: Trump won't be called on his lies.

A senior official admitted the move was a reaction to hostile press coverage. The view at the highest reaches of the incoming administration is that the press is the enemy. "They are the opposition party," said the senior official. "I want 'em out of the building. We are taking back the press room."

The incoming Trump administration is intent on neutering the White House press corps. If it happens, it will be another step toward neutering our democracy.

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