

Today	Thursday	Friday
		
High: 68 Low: 49 Precip: 20%	High: 73 Low: 52 Precip: 10%	High: 72 Low: 55 Precip: 40%

IN BRIEF

House approves ban on gun damage lawsuits

SALEM — Gun makers or sellers could not be sued for damages caused by illegal use of firearms under a bill easily approved Tuesday by the House.

The measure went to the Senate on a 39-17 vote despite opponents' claims that it is constitutionally flawed.

Backers of the bill said the gun industry is prone to harassment by opponents who have brought lawsuits without merit around the country in hopes of making a legitimate business liable for criminals' acts.

Lawmakers need to protect the industry "from frivolous lawsuits that intend to run it out of business," said Rep. Chuck Burley, R-Bend.

The bill, which also covers ammunition, is sought by Nosler, Inc., a long-time Bend-based ammunition maker.

The measure still would permit damage lawsuits to be brought under allegations that weapons were defective or that laws governing firearms sales were violated.

Gun sellers also could be sued for damages when there was evidence they knew or should have known that a buyer "was likely to use the firearm in a manner that would cause unreasonable risk of physical injury."

Democratic Rep. Robert Ackerman of Eugene argued that the bill probably would be struck down in court.

He said the measure would take away the state constitutional right to a legal remedy for an injury — the right to sue for damages — without providing an alternative.

But Rep. Wayne Krieger, D-Gold Beach, said the remedy is "you can sue the person using the gun."

Other supporters said baseball bats and cars can be used to injure people and that product makers shouldn't be responsible for their criminal misuse.

Opponents of the bill contended

that it goes too far in shielding a business from liability for negligence.

The bill "singles out one industry and says they have no duty of care," said Rep. Greg Macpherson, D-Lake Oswego.

He said the measure apparently would bar a lawsuit if a gun dealer left a store unlocked at night and weapons were stolen or if a loaded gun was left unattended.

"At least the facts should go to a judge or jury," he said.

Three workers injured in chemical plant blast

PORTLAND — Three people suffered minor injuries Monday after a pressure cooker exploded at a chemical plant near the Columbia River, officials said.

The injuries were not considered life-threatening and the workers underwent decontamination before being taken to an area hospital, according to Portland Fire and Rescue.

Workers at Lacamas Laboratories Inc. were heating a pharmaceutical precursor used in drugs to fight HIV in Africa when the pressure cooker exploded, causing a two-alarm fire, officials said.

State and city environmental agencies were on the scene, monitoring whether chemicals from the plant leaked into the Columbia River.

"It was a pretty substantial explosion," Lt. Allen Oswald of the Portland Fire Bureau told KPTV at the scene. "There were some in there that were bad actors — chemicals that don't play well together."

About 200 workers at a nearby Nordstrom warehouse were evacuated following the explosion.

Power to the area was knocked out, and a water main and natural gas lines were damaged, officials said.

The cause of the explosion is under investigation.

School superintendent resigns after citation

PORTLAND — The superintendent of the North Bend School District has resigned following a citation for public indecency.

Michael Struiksma, 51, had been on paid suspension since May 2 pending an investigation into allegations he violated his contract with the school district.

The school board did not release details when it announced the suspension or the resignation.

But the Douglas County sheriff's office told The Associated Press on

Tuesday that Struiksma had been cited for public indecency after a county parks department employee overheard a sexual encounter between two men in a public restroom on the docks at Winchester Bay on April 21.

The parks worker took down the license plate numbers of cars driven by the two men and gave it to sheriff's deputies, who investigated and eventually cited Struiksma on May 1, said Deputy Dwes Hutson, sheriff's department spokesman.

Deputies also cited Joshua David Cox, 22, of Elkton, Hutson said.

Struiksma was scheduled to appear May 31 in Douglas County Justice Court in Reedsport to enter a plea to the misdemeanor citation.

Rick Evans, chairman of the North Bend school board, announced after a board meeting Monday night that Struiksma had resigned.

"As of today, he is no longer employed by the district," Evans told The Register-Guard. "From our perspective, it's over."

Struiksma was hired as superintendent May 3, 2004, and began work last July at an annual salary of \$90,000. He previously served as an assistant superintendent in Albemarle County, Va., and Silver City, N.M., according to the North Bend School District's Web site.

Evans told The Register-Guard that the school board has not discussed hiring a new superintendent, but he said the district likely would hire someone temporarily for next year and conduct a search for a permanent replacement.

The board named veteran school district administrator Jim Moyer, 58, as interim superintendent.

Bones of man found near Seattle-area park

BLACK DIAMOND, Wash. — Human bones have been found near Kanaskat-Palmer State Park east of this King County town southeast of Seattle.

Sheriff's Sgt. John W. Urquhart said the remains of Thomas Bottorff, 45, apparently had been in place about 18 months before they were found Saturday in a wooded, overgrown area.

Investigators in the King County medical examiner's office said Monday the cause of death remained undetermined.

— The Associated Press

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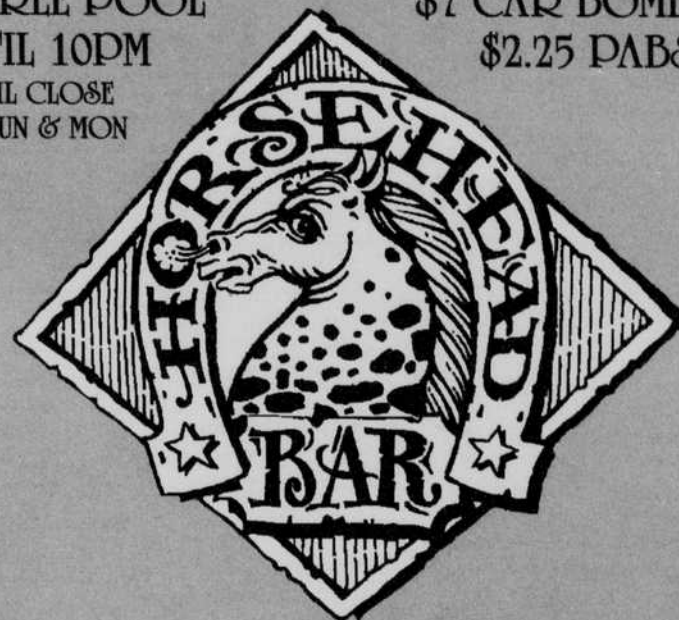
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