

Hemp

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Opponents, including the Turner Fire Department and Cascade School District, had cited concerns about increased truck traffic on narrow, winding, Parrish Gap Road, which also is used by school buses, bicyclists and farm equipment.

They worried odors and particulate matter could interfere with farms and a dairy nearby. And they said criminals could try to steal hemp stored on the property.

“We had a broad coalition of people in the area who worked very hard to express their concerns against the application due to the potential loss of valuable farmland and other conflicts,” said Roger Kaye, president of Friends of Marion County, a local land-use watchdog. Kaye also lives about 2 miles south of the site.

Marion County already has approved a half-dozen hemp processing facilities. But Jupiter’s proposal was by far the largest, county officials said.

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Storms

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In all, there was \$1.1 million in damage from the storm and the county declared it a local emergency.

After the tornado, the police department was relegated to setting up its command center in the intersection of public streets since the buildings housing the police and fire departments were damaged.

“We were not prepared to deal with stuff like that. Tornadoes in Oregon?” Schmitz said.

“What do we do? We eventually moved it into the fire department once we found that the building was fine. But we had to go through buildings and decide if people were trapped.”

There were precious few minutes from when the storm appeared on weather radar and when it began ripping through Aumsville.

Even if the StormReady system had been in place, it likely wouldn’t have made much difference in alerting the public.

“It was one of the stronger tornadoes in Oregon,” NOAA Warning Coordination Meteorologist Tyree Wilde said.

Getting cities prepared for disasters

Wilde said the StormReady program started in the Tornado Alley city of Tulsa, Okla., in the late 1990s and has expanded nationwide to communities in vulnerable areas.

Though Aumsville is the first city in the Willamette Valley to receive the certification, most cities on the Oregon Coast have it as they are in tsunami

areas.

In order to receive the certification, the cities must establish a 24-hour warning post and emergency operations center – Aumsville’s police department – have more than one way to receive the warnings and alert the public, promote the importance through community seminars and develop a formal plan, including training spotters and holding emergency exercises.

“And you want redundant ways to receive and disseminate. In case one fails, you have three or four different methods,” Wilde said.

Technology has helped Aumsville in some areas, such as METCOM 911. Schmitz said the city has access to the Everbridge Mass Notification system to be able to alert citizens among other communication tools.

“We work with the fire department ... because we want to be able to identify our vulnerable populations,” Schmitz said.

“So somebody who might not be able to get out of a nursing home or adult care facility, we know to go and get those people if we have to do evacuation.”

The first of 20 cities in Marion County

Marion County is embarking on getting all 20 cities in the county prepared with similar systems.

Aumsville is the first of the cities alphabetically, but it also is the one most looked at because of the tornado.

“I did some research and in the last, I think it was 50 years ... that of all of the counties in Oregon, Marion County has had the most tornadoes in the last 50 years,” said Marion County Emergency Management Program Coordinator Krista Carter said.

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Aumsville residents are rebuilding their community a year after a tornado ripped through town, leaving a path of construction. This home's roof has been repaired after a tree fell on it during the tornado. Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2011. STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE

The chances of a tornado ripping through another of Marion County’s 20 cities isn’t large, but other cities could face other natural disasters such as an earthquake or flooding.

“It’s for any type of weather event,” said Kathleen Silva, Emergency Manager for Marion County. “It could be for flooding.”

Silva said getting the StormReady certification for Aumsville was the start.

“The thought of going to 19 other cities to get our communities ready has my attention,” Marion County Commissioner Sam Brentano said.

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