

Appeal Tribune

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2021 | SILVERTONAPPEAL.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Oregon's spike in deaths wasn't just COVID-19

Bill Poehler
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Some of the older patients Salem oncologist Dr. Bud Pierce had been treating for cancer stopped showing up for regular visits in March 2020 as the state went on lockdown due to COVID-19.

It's unclear whether they had been afraid to venture out, or were unable to leave their assisted-living communities, or didn't have anyone willing to help them get to their appointments in the fearful days of the

Experts believe deaths from drug overdoses, cancer, heart conditions and Alzheimer's disease are related to the pandemic

pandemic.

But they never came back.

Pierce said they died not from COVID-19, but from the lack of access to life-saving cancer treatments.

It was expected 2020 would be the deadliest year in Oregon history due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But new data shows the spike can be attributed to more

than just people dying after contracting the coronavirus.

According to the Oregon Health Authority, 40,150 people died last year, 3,853 more than the state's five-year average. Experts label those as excess deaths.

See **EXCESS, Page 2A**

Lawsuit targets post-fire logging



Damage from wildfires is seen at the Shellburg Falls area in the Santiam State Forest. OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

Environmental groups sue to stop what they view as an overly aggressive harvest

Zach Urness Salem Statesman Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

Seven environmental groups filed a lawsuit seeking to halt post-fire logging in Santiam State Forest.

The suit aims to stop the Oregon Department of Forestry from current logging and stop it from moving forward with timber sales and hazard tree removal across 3,000 acres of state forest burned by the Labor Day Fires around the Santiam Canyon.

The groups cited concerns over recreation, drinking water and forest health in asking a Multnomah Circuit Court judge to issue an injunction at a hearing scheduled for April 30. If successful, all logging would be halted until the case was decided.

That delay is important because burned and killed trees only remain viable for wood products for a limited time before they become too rotten, meaning any delay could impact the timber's market value.

It's the latest salvo in an increasingly contentious battle over how to manage over 1 million acres of forest burned in the Labor Day fires. Environmental groups say officials are being too aggressive in clearing burned forest that should regenerate naturally, while timber interests highlight turning burned forest into wood products that create jobs and helps communi-

ties rebuild.

In the case of the Santiam State Forest, environmentalists are turning to a tried and true tactic — lawsuits — to stop what they view as an overly aggressive harvest.

"Salvage logging the Santiam State Forest will do great damage to spotted owls, struggling salmon populations, water quality and forest recovery," Noah Greenwald, endangered species director with the Center for Biological Diversity, said in a news release.

Multiple locals disagreed.

"The plan that was put forward is very responsible and only accounts for a very small percentage of what was burned," Marion County Commissioner Kevin Cameron said. "It's good stewardship to go in and use some of those salvaged logs and put them to use while supporting our communities' rebuilding efforts."

The lawsuit specifically targets the North Cascade District 2021 Annual Revised Operations Plan, which was completed after the wildfires and would generate around 56.2 million board feet of timber in 2021 to pay for reopening and restoration expenses while sending logs to local mills.

See **LOGGING, Page 2A**

Silverton sergeant sentenced for attacking wife

Virginia Barreda and Whitney Woodworth
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

A former Silverton police sergeant was sentenced to three years of probation for attacking his wife, barricading himself in their Keizer home and engaging in an hours-long standoff with a SWAT team.

Rene Bravo, 61, was sentenced following a five-day trial in mid-March in Marion County Circuit Court. A jury found Bravo guilty of two counts of second-degree attempted assault constituting domestic violence, two counts of unlawful use of a weapon, interfering with a police officer and attempted fourth-degree assault.

Bravo's wife, who is also in law enforcement, attributed the sleep-aid Ambien, which her husband was prescribed to help with insomnia related to his overnight shifts and changing work hours, to his behavior the night of the attack.

She pointed to the trauma and stress her husband endured after decades in law enforcement — child abuse calls, suicides and fatal crashes. She said he was given a life-saving award for pulling a person attempting suicide from a carbon monoxide-filled garage.

"These are traumas law enforcement deals with on a daily basis," she said.

According to online law enforcement records, Bravo joined the Silverton Police Department in 2009 and was promoted to sergeant in 2018. He previously worked with the Aurora Police Department, Hubbard Police Department and the Oregon Army National Guard.

With his certification revoked, his gun rights taken away and his status as a felon, Bravo's entire way of life is gone, his wife said.

It is the Statesman Journal's policy to not name victims of domestic violence.

Hiding guns, pills, car keys

"The defendant was in complete control of how much of his prescription Ambien he took and the evidence will demonstrate he took it pretty much all day long and into the evening, impairing himself in control of what he was doing to himself," Marion County Deputy District Attorney Katie Suver said during opening statements.

Bravo's wife said she knew her husband had taken a significant amount of Ambien throughout the day, but she didn't know how much.

Bravo slept in the home office the night before and didn't come out of the room for most of the day, but his wife heard his pill bottle rattling several times, Suver said.

When Bravo asked his wife for help cutting his hair, she noticed he was impaired. She also observed him taking a pill before he got in the shower after his haircut.

He was supposed to go to a range training for work in Woodburn that evening, but "she realized she could not let him go," Suver said.

At some point, Bravo's wife took the Ambien bottles and put them in a safe in their bedroom.

She hid his duty weapon in the garage and brought some of his rifles into the office.

She also hid his car keys and offered to drive him to the training.

But he refused and insisted he was OK to drive, Suver said.

Later that night, the woman heard the sound of velcro coming from downstairs. In her testimony before the jury, she said she could tell he was putting on his ballistic vest and could hear him looking for his gear to go to the gun range.

The woman acknowledged she brought a landline phone upstairs to the bedroom — so dispatchers could ping the address, if needed — because she had a sense

See **SENTENCED, Page 2A**



Former Silverton police sergeant Rene Bravo listens during his sentencing for a domestic violence attack. BRIAN HAYES / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Some Oregon residents wary of taking vaccine

Among reasons: Quick development, unknown long-term side effects

Tracy Loew
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Demand for COVID-19 vaccines is leveling off in some Oregon counties, even as eligibility drastically expands.

All Oregonians over the age of 16 will be eligible for vaccines on April 19. But officials expect by mid-May — well before the state achieves enough community immunity to stop the virus' spread — some areas will have more shots than people willing to get them.

Nationwide, about 25% of adults say they probably

or definitely won't get the vaccine, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The Oregon Health Authority doesn't track or estimate the number of people refusing shots overall or in certain categories, such as health care workers, OHA spokeswoman Delia Hernández said.

But after weeks of eligibility for seniors, Oregon data is beginning to reflect that vaccine hesitancy.

In seven of the state's less populous counties, few-

See **VACCINE, Page 3A**

Online at **SilvertonAppeal.com**

News updates: ● Breaking news ● Get updates from the Silverton area

Photos: ● Photo galleries

Vol. 140, No. 18

Serving the Silverton Area Since 1880
A Unique Edition of the Statesman Journal

