

Appeal Tribune

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Many renters could soon be evicted

Thousands in Oregon could soon be evicted for back rent

Bill Poehler
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The unpaid rent grew quickly in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic on the 3,500 rental units Andie Smith manages.

Though renters in Oregon couldn't be evicted for not paying rent through June 2021 because of eviction moratoriums, that back rent still accrued.

The people renting the properties Smith manages — which are owned by investment groups including retirement funds and pensions — got behind by about \$3 million as they struggled to pay bills. One tenant fell behind in rent by \$40,000.

Renters now have to pay that back money or can be

evicted. The state's protection expired last week.

The state is now preparing to send notices to landlords of 3,791 people who applied for emergency rental assistance and were denied. Combined with the expiration of legislative protection, it is expected to lead to a spike in evictions in the coming weeks.

Oregon's rental assistance program was aimed at renters and not those who provided their housing.

That created a system where landlords have had to rely on tenants to tell them they were denied help from the state. If renters failed to do that, the landlords can start evicting people when they receive that determination in the coming days and weeks.

"It's going to look like all of a sudden providers lost their minds when in reality it's a direct result of a decision that OHCS made to not send the notices out of denial as they happened in 2021," Deborah Imse, executive director of Multifamily NW, said.

Renters can't be evicted for non-payment if they show their landlord proof they applied for rental assis-

tance by June 30. A law was passed in an emergency session of the state Legislature providing "safe harbor" as renters await a determination by the state on their application.

Some caught up, others still wait

Through the assistance program, many renters in Oregon caught up on past-due rent. About 40,000 people have gotten help. Renters were allowed to apply for up to 12 months of back rent.

But there are still millions of dollars owed. Some people who applied for rental assistance received a determination of whether they would receive help quickly. Some didn't.

"I received a denial notice earlier this month for somebody who had applied at the end of July," Smith, who has worked for the housing provider for nine

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Sustainable Silverton takes its green seriously



Elyce Hues, co-founder of Sustainable Silverton, is leading the effort to make her community more green.
GEOFF PARKS/SPECIAL FOR THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Geoff Parks
Special for the Statesman Journal

From hooking up Silvertonians with recycling Head and Shoulders containers to setting up Oregon Garden community garden plots, a Silverton group wants to put its arms around the city and guide it to sustainability.

Sustainable Silverton co-founder Elyce Hues said the resident-run, grass-roots organization — created in 2016 and currently progressing toward a non-profit designation — has lofty goals.

About a half-dozen volunteers who Hues calls the "steering committee" and one intern from the Willamette University Environmental Studies Program meet online monthly to discuss ongoing operations.

Though Hues said initially the group wanted to advocate at the state and federal level, "it kind of came about that people seemed to be much more interested in doing something close to home, focusing on Silverton."

"We're starting at the beginning again, because we

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State asks for comment on plans for 'no drone zones'

Zach Urness
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Maps that establish "no drone zones" at Oregon's state parks and on the Oregon Coast would be created under a plan being finalized by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

Drones would likely be outlawed near campgrounds, nesting wildlife, areas with heavy recreation use or around historic buildings, to name just a few places, state officials said.

Officials are asking the public to comment on rules that specify where people can and cannot take off and land with unmanned aircraft by April 7. Comments can be emailed to OPRD.publiccomment@oregon.gov.

"The proposed rules are intended to provide clarity for drone pilots, hobbyists and the general public to know where drone take-off and landing is allowed and prohibited within a state park and along the ocean shore," the agency said in a news release.

Problem is, Oregon has no authority over airspace — only where people take off and land with drones. And legally, they needed legislation from the Oregon Senate to begin that rule-making.

The rules are fairly simple: at each state park and along the length of the Oregon Coast, new maps would be created that show where people cannot launch or land a drone — in effect creating no drone zones. Outside those zones, it would be legal to take off or land.

The maps would be created by parks officials and posted on Oregon's state park website, and would be open to public comment for 30 days.

In addition, people could apply for a special permit to take off or land within the closed zones.

"If people wanted to fly from the closed areas, the permit just gives us an ability to have a conversation about how that might work," said Katie Gauthier, government relations and policy manager for OPRD. "Maybe the pilot would need to get insurance. Maybe

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West Coast states to lift mask mandates

Tracy Loew
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Oregon's indoor and school mask mandates will lift March 12, one week earlier than previously announced.

Gov. Kate Brown made the decision in connection with Washington and California, which also will lift their mask mandates on that date.

"As has been made clear time and again over the last two years, COVID-19 does not stop at state borders or county lines," Brown said in a statement. "Together, as we continue to recover from the Omicron

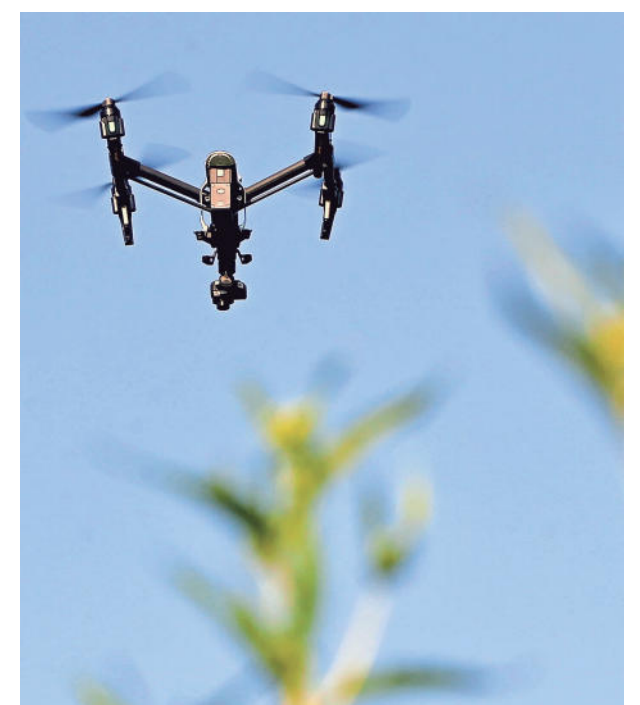
surge, we will build resiliency and prepare for the next variant and the next pandemic."

The announcement came on the two-year anniversary of the first COVID-19 case identified in Oregon, in an elementary school employee in Lake Oswego.

This is the second time Oregon has changed its target to lift the mask mandate.

On Feb. 7, the Oregon Health Authority announced the state would no longer require masks in schools beginning March 31. It said it would lift the mask mandate for indoor public places on March 31, or sooner if COVID-19 hospitalizations fell below 400.

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The beauty of Oregon's natural spaces has been an attraction for photographers for years. Drones are increasingly in the hands of many of those photographers. ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

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