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Good day to our valued subscriber Steven Cloud of La Grande

Fire agencies strengthen skills through wildland fire training

■ Trainees must complete week-long fire school, including classroom and field experience

By Cherise Kaechele
The Observer

The Oregon Department of Forestry declared fire season June 28 in Northeast Oregon. That means the firefighters who respond to the wildland fires in the district had only a matter of days to complete their training for this season.

Jamie Knight, ODF La Grande unit public information officer, said firefighters who are facing their first season must complete a week-long fire school with other fire agencies that includes classroom and field experience. Their field experience teaches them how to use the tools and equipment necessary to respond to wildland fires, and also includes live fire training.

To get the opportunity to become a wildland firefighter, though, Knight said, applicants must first show they can run three miles in 45 minutes with a

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Cherise Kaechele / The Observer

Seven acres of land was treated as a wildfire for an Oregon Department of Forestry training in June of 2017. The firefighters involved in the training set fire to the land and finished the day mopping it up.



Cherise Kaechele / The Observer

Firefighters from La Grande, Baker City, Wallowa and Pendleton gathered together at the Hancock Forest Management land outside of Elgin for a live-fire exercise in June of 2017.

■ Firefighter Cancer Registry Act of 2018 aims to track firefighters' health

By Max Denning
The Observer

In 2015, a five-year study of cancer in firefighters by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health was completed. The study, which included nearly 30,000 firefighters from Chicago, Philadelphia and San Francisco, found that the firefighters in the study were more likely to have a cancer diagnosis or die from cancer than the general U.S. population.

On July 7, 2018, the president signed the Firefighter Cancer Registry Act of 2018 that requires the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to develop and maintain a registry to collect

data regarding the incidence of cancer in firefighters.

When the bill unanimously passed through the House, U.S. Rep. Greg Walden (R-Hood River) said the bill was necessary to protect firefighters.

"These heroic first responders experience occupational health risks every day. In my district, it's often from forest fires," Walden said in September 2017. "This past weekend I saw firsthand what our firefighters face as they battle a number of fires raging in Oregon, putting themselves in harm's way to save property, infrastructure, lives, watersheds, habitats and forests."

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Elgin community service program provides alternative to high court fines and low payments

■ City and court work together to provide a better solution for citizens' compliance

By Audrey Love
The Observer

The City of Elgin and Municipal Court Judge Laura Eckstein have partnered to offer the city's residents a secondary option to pay fees and fines imposed by the court. A community service program will allow residents the option of working off their fines through labor via the public works department.

According to Eckstein, the program aims to target a segment of people who essentially become

"trapped" in the court system, who may have a history of noncompliance or been charged with a series of violations at once. More specifically, it helps those with a large amount of fines or fees who lack the economic ability to pay.

"This program could benefit lots of different kinds of people, but the most urgent need would be the people who have the most difficulty paying," Eckstein said. "(It will) give them a chance out, so finances aren't the thing keeping them from

compliance. (Fees) just compound and compound. It can go from something little to (something) huge really fast. I don't want the system to be so uncaring that they stay in that situation."

Eckstein, along with the city's ordinance officer and Union County law enforcement, are working to establish a more hands-on approach. The community service program was borne out of the city's need — and Eckstein's desire — to create greater compliance among El-

gin's residents by offering those who are struggling a more viable option.

"It really bothered me, seeing individual after individual appearing (before the court)," Eckstein said of the group she hopes this program will most benefit. "It's not satisfying to me at all to just impose sentences. There are things I can do to creatively sentence them, to essentially empower them to get out of the situation themselves. I really want to accomplish the goal (of compliance). I thought

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Two dead in Wallowa County motorcycle accident

■ Oregon Route 3 closed for five hours Friday

Observer Staff

Two motorcyclists died on Oregon Highway 3 Friday afternoon at the Joseph Canyon Viewpoint 32 miles north of Enterprise.

Around 4:30 p.m. July 20, Galen Joseph Rottinghaus, 79, of Oak Harbor, Washington, and his passenger, Patricia Ann Evans, 77, of El Cajon, California, were on a bronze 2013 Harley-Davidson Tri Glide motorcycle traveling northbound with a group when the lead motorcycle began to slow down and turn into the Joseph Canyon Viewpoint.

Rottinghaus was behind another motorcycle, tried to steer around and lost control, overturning on the shoulder. Evans suffered fatal injuries and was pronounced dead at the scene. Rottinghaus was transported by air ambulance to St. Joseph Regional Medical Center in Lewiston, Idaho, where he was later pronounced dead.

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Commissioners prepare November ballot measure

By Katy Nesbitt
For The Observer

ENTERPRISE — A proposal to increase the lodging tax for accommodations in unincorporated areas of Wallowa County will be put to a vote in the November general election.

The idea of increasing the local transient lodging tax was introduced in a county commissioner meeting this spring. Todd Nash, board of commissioners chairman, suggested the increase in order to raise funds for the sheriff's office and to improve the facilities at the Wallowa County Fairgrounds.

After the initial discussion, the tax was discussed at fair board meetings and two public hearings held at the Wallowa County Fairgrounds' Cloverleaf Hall in June.

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 57 LOW
Mainly clear
Tuesday 95/55
Mostly sunny

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541-963-3161
Issue 85
2 sections, 16 pages
La Grande, Oregon

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