

TRAINING

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45-pound pack.

"It's a great way to pay for college," Knight said of those young people who decide to join for just the fire season.

If firefighters decide to come back after the initial year, they receive different classes.

"The training then becomes very specific," Knight said, listing public information officer classes and investigator training as examples.

Those classes are generally given during the winter when trainees aren't busy fighting wildland fires. The training is necessary and condensed into a very short period of time so the firefighters will be ready to go when that first fire call comes in.

"It has to be before the fires start," she said. "This year's fire school started June 18."

Applicants who have already gone through the first-year training are given priority while hiring. Then, any remaining positions are filled by newer firefighters.

That training — which is also given to firefighters with the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, local municipalities and Bureau of Indian Affairs — changes to keep up as new techniques and tools are discovered.

"There's a better evolution as science comes along," Knight said.

She said just as CPR techniques are getting better, hazardous material standards are improving.

"Safety is always at the forefront," she said.

And the training must be accomplished as quickly as possible, she said, partly because the timing of fire season varies from state to state.

Knight has already left for and returned from major wildfires, like the one in Colorado.

She said Colorado's fire season is different from ours so it worked out that she could go.

"When Colorado is having their fire season, we're not at that extreme yet," she said. "Their monsoon season will end their fire season."

The trainings also give new firefighters the opportunity to meet their fellow teammates so they learn about one another before they face a dangerous situation together.

"Knowing who the folks are beforehand is extremely important," she said. "You're on the front line with them."

ACT

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As the NIOSH study illustrated, the cancer risk for firefighters is substantial. The study concluded that the occurrences of lung cancer diagnosis or death increased with the amount of time spent at fires. Also, the higher the number of fire runs, the higher chance of firefighters dying from leukemia.

In addition to the greater number of cancer diagnoses and deaths, the firefighters in the study demonstrated a higher risk of being diagnosed with more specific types of cancer. For instance, there were about twice as many firefighters with malignant mesothelioma, a rare type of cancer caused by exposure to asbestos.

Fighting fires also increases the risk of other types of cancer, the study showed. The occurrences of lung cancer diagnosis or death increased with amount of time spent at fires. The higher the

"Nationwide, this is a problem facing our firefighters."

— Rep. Greg Walden, in a press release

number of fire runs the higher chance of leukemia death for firefighters.

In La Grande in 2014, the most recent year for which data is available, the La Grande Fire Department responded to 186 calls categorized as fire responses.

So far in 2018, there have been 19 fires in the Northeast Oregon district of the Oregon Department of Forestry.

The Firefighter Cancer Registry Act calls for a voluntary collection of data from firefighters around the country. Congress appropriated \$2.5 million per year for the fiscal years 2018 through 2022 for the data collection.

The coauthor of the House bill U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ) said the registry's data will be used by researchers to understand more about cancer in firefighters.

"The creation of a specialized firefighter cancer registry will provide scientists and medical professionals with the detailed national data that will allow them to study the relationship between firefighters' exposure to dangerous fumes and harmful toxins, and the increased risk for several major cancers," said a release from Pascrell's office.

Walden, who chairs the congressional committee where the bill originated, said the registry was requested by firefighters.

"Nationwide, this is a problem facing our firefighters — they came to us and said we need this registry," Walden said in a press release. "Close to eight million acres have burned in wildfires so far (in 2017) — over 525,000 acres in Oregon alone — burning both public and private lands. Thousands of residents have been evacuated, but Oregon's firefighters, of course, stayed behind. That is just what they do."

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BALLOT

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"Within the context of the hearings, I wanted to find out what would be fair, if anything, in raising transient lodging tax and where to do so," Nash said.

Visitors pay 9.8 percent in state, city and county lodging taxes in Enterprise and Joseph, but those who stay overnight in the unincorporated areas like Minam, Wallowa Lake and bed-and-breakfast inns outside of city limits pay 6.8 percent. Because of this difference, Nash said the commissioners chose to limit the proposed tax increase to only outside of Joseph and Enterprise.

Many in attendance at the public meetings were opposed to the tax hike, including Ron Woodin, who owns the Wallowa Lake Resort and Flying Arrow and manages properties for other landowners. Woodin said visitors don't use the fairgrounds enough to justify the tax

increase.

"The tax would take money from a group not even using the facility," Woodin said.

Nash said the state requires 70 percent of the tax to be used for tourist-related activities, and a number of Oregon counties have used transient lodging tax to support their fairs.

"Fairs have met that tourist-related qualification, and our fairgrounds is called Wallowa County Fairgrounds and Event Center — meaning it is available for more than the fair," Nash said.

With improved facilities and marketing, the fairgrounds could be better used for weddings and family reunions, he said.

"We can attract use with reasonable rent while at the same time capturing enough money to add to our revenue," he added.

The fair board has agreed to set up a tourism committee that will oversee the money coming in from transient lodging, Nash said, and how it will be spent on fairgrounds

improvements.

Woodin said he isn't convinced that the money will be managed properly because the fair board has no strategic or business plan. He complained that the fairground-use charges are too low.

"They don't charge enough for the use of the fairgrounds," Woodin said. "They run it as a nonprofit looking for someone else to pay."

The fairgrounds charges for camping, indoor arena use and renting Cloverleaf Hall for events and meetings, but Woodin said the fair board members should take on a more serious fundraising role.

"It's very frustrating that they don't earn more in user fees. When I hunt or fish, I buy a license," Woodin said.

Another concern, Woodin said, is that the tax increase would eat into business profits, including his own.

Nash argued the increase is still less than the average lodging tax

in Oregon of 11 percent, and he has seen it as high as 24 percent in some parts of the state.

At a June 26 public hearing the commissioners voted 2-1 to pass the decision on to voters living in unincorporated areas of Wallowa County. County legal counsel is now working to prepare a ballot measure for the November election.

ACCIDENT

Continued from Page 1A according to the Oregon State Police.

"We believe he did not see (the turn signal of the driver ahead of him)," OSP Sgt. Kyle Hove said.

According to Hove, witnesses said they saw the front driver's signal and that the turn signals on the motorcycle were working.

Alcohol is not believed to have been a factor in the accident, Hove said.

The northbound lane of State Route 3 near milepost 13 was closed for about five hours during the investigation.

Oregon State Police was assisted by the Wallowa County Sheriff's Office, Enterprise Fire Department, Wallowa Memorial Hospital Ambulance, Life Flight and Oregon Department of Transportation.

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ELGIN

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"How could we get there?" So I started asking how other people are doing it."

Eckstein conferred with judges in other jurisdictions that have community service programs already in place.

With the support and input of the mayor, city council and public safety committee, Eckstein established a system in which offenders work with the public works department for minimum wage on whatever tasks the department is currently focusing on, varying by season and need. Participants will be treated the same as any public works employee in terms of job duties and expectations, and will agree to terms and conditions beforehand so they're fully aware of what they're signing up for.

The wages participants earn will be credited toward their fines. The amount, or hours, of community service will both depend on their fines and what Eckstein believes is warranted, based on their situation. For example, those who are able to pay a portion of their fines will be

encouraged to pay what they can and, at the judge's discretion, work off the rest through the program.

With the help of the court clerk, Eckstein is currently in the process of digging through older and existing cases for those who meet the criteria.

"I have people who might pay \$10 or \$20 a month (toward their fines), and they know they're going to be paying for years," Eckstein said. "There comes a point where people check out and they feel disengaged from the process. They don't feel there's a (way

for them to get out of that situation, and that doesn't help anybody."

While those particular cases are the current top priority, the judge will also begin screening other cases and offering those the option of community service.

"What's different about our program is that we're being proactive and actually seeking out individuals," Eckstein said. "We're trying to look outside the box and provide a solution that's actually going to help that person get out of the situation they're in. We

want them to be law abiding."

Eckstein ordered the first community service case in June and expects other residents to take advantage of the option in the future.

"The people I've offered (the program) to so far are just elated at the opportunity not to have to be stuck in that ongoing cycle," she said. "I think it's going to be a really productive solution for a lot of people."

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