

DAILY PLANNER

TODAY

Today is Wednesday, Aug. 1, the 213th day of 2018. There are 152 days left in the year.



TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT

On Aug. 1, 1966, Charles Joseph Whitman, 25, went on an armed rampage at the University of Texas in Austin that killed 14 people, most of whom were shot by Whitman while he was perched in the clock tower of the main campus building. Whitman, who had also slain his wife and mother hours earlier, was finally gunned down by police.

ON THIS DATE

In 1714, Britain's Queen Anne died at age 49; she was succeeded by George I.

In 1876, Colorado was admitted as the 38th state.

In 1907, the U.S. Army Signal Corps established an aeronautical division, the forerunner of the U.S. Air Force.

In 1911, Harriet Quimby became the first woman to receive a U.S. pilot's certificate from the Aero Club of America. Quimby's accomplishments included being the first woman to fly across the English Channel. She was killed in an accident in July 1912 at age 37.

In 1936, the Olympics opened in Berlin with a ceremony presided over by Adolf Hitler.

In 1944, an uprising broke out in Warsaw, Poland, against Nazi occupation; the revolt lasted two months before collapsing.

In 1957, the United States and Canada announced they had agreed to create the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD).

In 1975, a 35-nation summit in Finland concluded with the signing of a declaration known as the Helsinki Accords dealing with European security, human rights and East-West contacts.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

Via Oregon DEQ
As of 7 a.m., Aug. 1
La Grande: 45 (Good)
Cove City Hall: 79 (Moderate)
Enterprise: 68 (Moderate)
Baker City: 62 (Moderate)

LOTTERY

Megabucks: \$4.8 million
4-14-34-41-44-46

Mega Millions: \$50 million
12-15-35-64-69-9-x2

Powerball: \$187 million
22-27-46-56-65-PB 13-x2

Win for Life: July 30
1-16-19-51

Pick 4:

July 31

• 1 p.m.: 7-0-6-3

• 4 p.m.: 0-0-3-1

• 7 p.m.: 8-5-4-9

• 10 p.m.: 3-6-0-9

Pick 4: July 30

• 1 p.m.: 2-7-2-1

• 4 p.m.: 3-5-0-5

• 7 p.m.: 1-3-0-7

• 10 p.m.: 6-7-5-7

ROAD REPORT

Numbers to call:
• Inside Oregon: 800-977-6368.
• Outside Oregon: 503-588-2941.

NEWSPAPER LATE?

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If your delivery is by motor carrier, delivery should be by 6 p.m. For calls after 6, please call 541-975-1690, leave your name, address and phone number. Your paper will be delivered the next business day.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The only fool bigger than the person who knows it all is the person who argues with him."

— Stanislaw J. Lec, Polish writer (1909-1966)



Cherise Kaechele/Observer file photo

Forest Service members work on a fire-training blaze in 2017.

Using graphs to map out fires

By Jayson Jacoby

WesCom News Service

Willy Crippen uses a series of line graphs to gauge the wildfire danger, and the graph on his computer monitor Monday afternoon looked something like Mount Everest.

Crippen pointed the cursor at the point where one line, appropriately rendered in flame red, peaks.

That apex represents the highest level for potential fire growth that Crippen's employer, the U.S. Forest Service, has measured for any July 30 during the period 1993 to 2015.

Monday's measurement matched that peak.

Little wonder, then, that Crippen and fire managers from other agencies are anxious about a fire season that hasn't even reached its most dangerous period, statistically speaking.

"We call it dirty August," said Crippen, who's the fire management officer for the Burnt-Powder Fire Zone, which covers most of the southern half of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. "Our peak of fire season historically is Aug. 8, give or take a few days."

So far a scarcity of lightning, which sparks a significant percentage of wildfires in the region most years, has made for a much quieter season in Northeastern Oregon compared with other parts of Oregon, California and Idaho.

But with a chance of thunderstorms today, Crippen was hardly complacent.

"We're ramped up (for the potential for lightning)," he said. "The fires that have started elsewhere this year are really taking off, in California (and) Idaho. We haven't had the starts, but the potential is definitely there."

Fire danger higher than in 2015

The graphs that Crippen was examining in his Baker City office depict the "Energy Release Component" (ERC).

This index estimates the amount of heat a fire would produce, and it's an effective way to gauge how difficult

it might be to douse a blaze, Crippen said.

Northeastern Oregon is divided into six regions, each with its own ERC, updated daily.

On Monday the ERC for each of the six regions was either at or just below the record high for the date.

That's worrisome in itself, but Crippen points out that the current ERCs are much higher than they were at this time in 2015 — less than two weeks before lightning ignited the biggest blaze in Baker County history, the 104,000-acre Cornet/Windy Ridge Fire south of Baker City.

The current ERCs range from 79 to 84. In late July 2015, the average among the six regions was about 60, Crippen said.

The numbers have risen rapidly this July.

Early in the month the ERCs were close to average, Crippen said. But the nearly record-breaking heat and little or no rainfall changed the situation substantially.

"Since July 25 or so we've been right on the maximum line (for the ERC)," Crippen said.

The fire threat is severe enough that the Forest Service and other agencies have been able to tap reserve budgets to bolster their firefighting forces.

Crippen said about 18 firefighters, some from Minnesota and others from Georgia, were slated to arrive early this week to work on the Wallowa-Whitman.

Steve Meyer, wildland fire supervisor at the Oregon Department of Forestry's Baker City office, said the department is paying two private bulldozer owners \$100 a day to be available if needed.

The Forestry Department also plans to hire two engines from local rural fire protection districts on a temporary basis, Meyer said.

"That's convenient because they already know the country," he said.

The Forestry Department has also contracted for two helicopters, one stationed in La Grande and the other in Wallowa County, to aug-

ment the region's aerial firefighting fleet, Meyer said.

Calculating the fire danger

The process starts with a series of several remote, automated weather stations scattered about the region, Crippen said.

These stations collect temperature and humidity data that are used to estimate the amount of moisture in various types of fire fuels, ranging from grass to large logs lying on the ground.

The fuels are categorized by the approximate number of hours it takes for them to dry out after a wetting rain (at least one-tenth of an inch). Grass and twigs smaller than a quarter-inch in diameter, for instance, are known as "1-hour fuels" or "fine fuels." The biggest logs, larger than 8 inches in diameter, are "10,000-hour fuels."

(There are also 10-hour, 100-hour and 1,000-hour fuels.)

Fuel moisture is a crucial component in the equation used to derive the daily ERC, Crippen said.

About once a month, employees gather various types of fuels from across the region and bake them in an oven to measure the moisture levels. The operation is designed to make sure the fuel moisture figures produced by the weather stations accurately reflect current conditions, Crippen said.

The ERC, however, is only one of the indexes that

fire managers peruse as they track the potential for trouble.

Another is the daily "burning index."

That takes into account the predicted wind speed, which can have a major effect on how quickly a fire spreads, Crippen said.

A third measurement, the "probability of ignition," is based on the idea that if 100 lit matches were dropped on the ground, how many would ignite a wildfire.

The various indexes and computer models give fire managers an idea about how a fire might behave, Crippen said, but predicting whether a fire might start, and where, is an altogether different matter.

Lightning typically starts about 80 percent of the fires on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, but human-caused fires are more common on private land and other areas under the Oregon Department of Forestry's jurisdiction.

Crippen said Northeastern Oregon has been fortunate so far this summer because lightning has been rare.

According to the Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch Center in La Grande, which compiles fire statistics from much of the region, there have been 55 fires this year — 45 of them human-caused and just 10 sparked by lightning.

"We've only had two lightning storms, and not many ignitions, which is fine with me," Crippen said.

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2018 Fair

Thursday, August 2, 2018 - FAMILY DAY, SENIOR DAY

| | | | | | |
|--------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 8am | Fair Opens | 8pm | Bad Penny Pleasuremakers, Main Stage | 10pm | Fair Closes |
| 8-10am | Senior Breakfast | 10pm | Fair Closes | Saturday, August 4, 2018 | |
| 9am | Open Class Goat Show | Friday, August 3, 2018 | | 8am | Fair Opens |
| 10am | Booth Exhibits Open | 8am | Fair Opens | 10am | Booth Exhibits Open |
| 10am | Log Cabin Opens, Family Fun | 2pm | Cascade Amusement Carnival Opens | 2pm | Cascade Amusement Buyer check in |
| 2pm | Cascade Amusement Carnival Opens | 4pm | Ring of Fire Reunion, Main Stage | 4pm | Junior Market Auction |
| 2pm | Bad Penny Pleasuremakers, Main Stage | 4pm | Fair Parade Line-up | 4pm | Depot Street Syncopators, Main Stage |
| 4pm | Talent Show, Main Stage | 5pm | Tap That Beer Garden Opens | 5pm | Tap That Beer Garden Opens |
| 6pm | Becky's Studio of Dance | 5:15pm | Parade Judging | 5pm | Junior Market Auction |
| 6pm | Muttin' Bustin' at Mavericks Arena | 6pm | Fair Parade Downtown | 8pm | Depot Street Syncopators, Main Stage |
| | | 8pm | Ring of Fire Reunion, Main Stage | 10pm | Fair Closes |