

OREGON IN BRIEF

From wire reports

Cost of fighting Oregon wildfires ahead of last year

The estimated cost of fighting Oregon wildfires this summer stands at more than \$180 million — \$30 million more than at the same time last year.

The Mail Tribune reports that 75 percent of those dollars have been spent on fires in southern Oregon, where remote and rugged wilderness areas have made it particularly difficult to stamp out more than a dozen major blazes.

The money spent on fire suppression pays for crews, equipment, supplies and expensive aerial support.

Firefighters will be working in triple-digit heat in the coming days, but meteorologists say there's no lightning in the forecast.

Oregon woman sues insurance company over skunk damages

An Oregon woman is suing a home insurance company after a skunk sprayed her dog and belongings inside her Grants Pass home.

The Oregonian/Oregon-Live reports Katherine Schaeffer in the lawsuit filed in Josephine County Circuit Court last month claims the skunk ruined more than \$112,000 worth of her possessions last year.

The suit claims Safeco Insurance has only paid \$2,000 for the damages.

Schaeffer's lawyer Scott Taylor says the claims adjusters failed to grasp the extent of the stench, and a "special personal property rider" on his client's homeowner policy should cover the damages.

Safeco spokesman Glenn Greenberg declined to comment, citing the pending litigation.

Schaeffer is also seeking \$38,000 for other costs, including cleaning and living expenses.

Jurors view truck of man killed during Ore. refuge standoff

After nine days of testimony, the government has rested its case against indicted FBI agent W. Joseph Astarita.

The Oregonian/Oregonian reports the defense began its case Tuesday, with Astarita's lawyers expecting to call no more than five witnesses. It's unknown if Astarita will testify.

Astarita is charged with making false statements and obstruction of justice after telling investigators he did not fire two shots that missed Robert "La-Voy" Fincum, an Arizona rancher who served as spokesman for the Ammon Bundy-led group that seized an Oregon wildlife refuge in 2016.

The errant shots came as Fincum left his pickup while authorities tried to arrest him. Oregon State Police fatally shot Fincum seconds later.

Jurors on Monday inspected a bullet hole in the roof of Fincum's truck, and heard an expert explain the trajectory of the shot. The demonstration took place at the loading dock of the federal courthouse.

Starving dog left at Oregon shelter dies from emaciation

The Marion County Sheriff's Office says it's looking for two men who left a starving Pomeranian at an animal shelter last week.

The sheriff's office says surveillance footage from Thursday night shows two men leaving the dog in a crate at the shelter entrance.

The dog died the following day. An examination showed it died of maltreatment and emaciation.

Those with information are asked to call the sheriff's non-emergency line at 503-588-5032.

Guest critically injured in Oregon hotel fire

Authorities say a guest at a hotel in Newport, Oregon, was critically injured in a weekend fire.

Newport police Sgt. Lance Cummings says the two other guests were treated for smoke inhalation after Sunday's blaze at the Knights Inn on North Coast Highway.

Cummings says responders saw large flames and thick smoke coming from a corner of the second floor, and were told that guests were trapped.

One guest was taken by an ambulance to a local hospital and then flown to Portland for treatment at a specialized burn unit. Though in critical condition, the patient is stable.

The two people treated for smoke inhalation have been released.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

Cummings says a guest helped the Newport firefighters battle the blaze.

Former deputy indicted on fraud charges

A former Skagit County Sheriff's deputy has been indicted on federal charges of using Pacific Northwest Police Detection Dog Association funds for his own benefit.

The association provides training and certification to law enforcement narcotic detection K9 teams in five states and British Columbia, Canada.

The indictment, filed Thursday, says Brian Lehr worked as a canine officer and became the association's treasurer in 1998.

Lehr collected payments made to the association for various purposes, including its annual training conference.

The indictment says Lehr used some of those funds between 2010 and 2015 to make payments on his personal credit card, to pay cable and cellphone bills and make purchases at various stores and restaurants.

Sheriff Will Reichardt said Monday that Lehr was terminated in 2016 after the allegations came to light.

It was not immediately known if Lehr has a lawyer. His arraignment is set for Aug. 16.

Three arrested for blocking driveway at ICE facility in Oregon

Federal officers arrested three people at the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in southwest Portland.

The arrests came as a group of clergy and others marched to building Tuesday morning and blocked a driveway.

The group sought a meeting with the regional ICE director and the release of more than 100 asylum seekers who are being held at a federal prison in Sheridan, Oregon.

ICE officials told KGW-TV that those arrested were charged with obstruction. KOIN-TV identified two of them as Rev. Michael Ellick and Rabbi Debra Kolodny.

The arrests come two weeks after a 38-day, round-the-clock protest came to an end outside the facility.

Hectic night sheds light on police process

By Jayati Ramakrishnan
East Oregonian

It was an officer from Umatilla who found the suspect in a Hermiston stabbing.

Aaron Zuwala was arrested early Monday, June 4, after several out-of-town officers, members of the major crime team helping Hermiston police on a hectic night, knocked on doors looking for someone who just stabbed two men near a storage unit on Kelli Boulevard.

Between 9 p.m. June 3 and 7 a.m. June 4, three incidents took place in Hermiston — the stabbing and two shootings — stretching Hermiston Police Department resources thin. During the initial response, the department relied on assistance from the major crime team, officers from neighboring agencies that help out when multiple incidents pile up.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said it's rare for that many emergencies to converge.

"It's very atypical," he said. "The last thing I can think of is when we had the officer-involved shooting in 2012, and OSP was dealing with the bus crash on Cabbage Hill that killed 17 people."

Lt. Randy Studebaker said when any major incident occurs, he or one of the police captains will immediately show up and appoint a case manager and a lead detective. They, along with other officers, will close off the scene to the public and begin collecting evidence. Officers also apply for a search warrant and notify the forensics lab.

The night of the stabbing, Studebaker, detective Freddy Sotelo, and Capt. Travis Eynon responded to the home on the south side of town around 10 p.m. While Studebaker and Sotelo worked through the night and into the next afternoon, Eynon was called away a few hours after the stabbing to manage officers who were responding

to the next incident, a shooting around 1 a.m. on West Hartley Avenue. He was joined by police detectives Victor Gutierrez and Robert Guerrero, who worked until about 6 p.m. the next day. At that scene, they found 26-year-old Erik Navarrete Campos, who had a gunshot wound to the head. He died later in the week from that wound, and police are investigating his death as a homicide.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said two patrol officers are on duty at all times. As the city continues to grow, that number may have to increase to three. And the long-term absences of three officers for health and family reasons are straining the department.

All the law enforcement agencies in Umatilla and Morrow counties have signed an agreement to provide mutual aid, which includes helping another department secure a scene, collect evidence, interview witnesses and suspects, write search warrants and attend autopsies. That night, Edmiston said the department received help from Boardman, Pendleton, Umatilla, Stanfield and Milton-Freewater police departments, as well as Umatilla and Morrow County sheriff's offices, Oregon State Police and the Blue Mountain Enforcement Narcotics Team. Edmiston estimated those assisting from outside agencies provided an average of 24 to 36 hours of assistance to HPD for the two incidents. Edmiston said his department was at minimum staffing that evening, and his own detectives worked longer to keep up with the workload.

He noted in these calls for mutual aid an officer may work overtime for another city. But each agency is responsible for paying their own employees overtime.

"That is why it is a give-and-take, and why we want to ensure we have a case

manager," Edmiston said in an email to the EO. "In addition to the lead detective to make sure there are still tasks to be done. If not, the case manager will start sending people home."

"In those first 48 hours," Studebaker said, "it's not so much investigating leads as trying to identify what those leads are."

Studebaker said after the stabbing they collected what information they could from the victims, but were only able to get the first name of the suspect. So they started looking into people associated with the victim and began going through the timeline of events.

"When we're looking into this is when we get the shooting call," Studebaker said.

Some Umatilla police officers who had been dispatched for mutual aid began knocking on doors.

"We kind of got some luck, the (suspect) opened the door and said, 'Hey, I've been waiting on you guys,'" Studebaker said.

Investigators interviewed Zuwala, who provided a statement that corroborated some of the details police knew. Officers recovered the weapon, which had been thrown into a field.

Police arrested and booked Zuwala in the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, and the next day he was arraigned on two counts of unlawful use of a weapon, two counts of first-degree assault and two counts of attempted murder. He awaits a pre-trial hearing Aug. 13.

Police have not released any more details about Navarrete's murder and are investigating it.

Around 7 a.m. that day, Umatilla County Sheriff's Office also responded to a shooting death at Windy Lane. The sheriff's office confirmed it continues to investigate the death and will not release any information.

For cases where the investigation is longer,

such as the Navarrete case, Studebaker said the process depends largely on the availability of evidence.

"I think it's important to remember the difference in the role of the police and the role of the prosecution," Studebaker said. "When we get that case, we don't know what's important, what's relevant, or what's going to be pivotal later."

Much of that is determined after they receive physical evidence back from the crime lab, which can take anywhere from a few days to a few months.

"We're taking on a huge chunk from the beginning, and then the prosecutor is able to whittle down what they need to work with," he said.

After the initial investigation, detectives will spend as much time as necessary on a case — but most local agencies don't have the staff to have a detective devote all their time to one case.

"I can't necessarily prioritize my caseload based off what's most important," Studebaker said. "I may have to prioritize it based on where I'm going to lose evidence."

Officers also immediately began communicating with the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office.

"On major crimes, the district attorney is one of the first people we notify," Studebaker said. Often, he said, the district attorney will respond to a crime scene or to briefings with detectives.

"They provide legal guidance, input from cradle to grave on a case."

A case will officially be turned over to the district attorney when it is ready for prosecution. Studebaker said that may be when police have exhausted all leads, or when they need to get a case through grand jury, or get an arrest warrant for someone who's fled the state. The stabbing was turned over to the district attorney within 24 hours of the incident.

Judge denies lawsuit by woman charged in shooting

Mail Tribune Staff

Environmental organizations and irrigation districts hope a new agreement could help discussions about managing flows on the Deschutes River focus more on collaboration than litigation in the future.

The Deschutes Basin Board of Control, which oversees eight irrigation districts that manage water within the Deschutes Basin, and six conservation groups have each signed a memo titled "A Shared Vision for the Deschutes: Working Together so Families, Farms, and Fish can Thrive."

The memo asks all signatories to work together as partners and commits them to a shared vision for the Deschutes River of the future, one with a healthier ecology and enough water to support sustainable agriculture and growing communities.

The agreement has no legal backing, and many of the ideas stem from the 1996 Upper Deschutes Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan. However, Gail Snyder, executive director for the Bend-based environmental group Coalition for the Deschutes and one of the leaders of the shared visioning process, said it represents an effort to get the various entities with a vested interest in water in the Deschutes River, many of whom have very different priorities and motivations, rowing in the same direction.

"There's a lot of baggage,

a lot of history," Snyder said. "But all of us are here, to some extent, because irrigation occurred in Central Oregon."

For the irrigation districts, following the memo means finding ways to conserve water wherever possible, including piping canals to reduce evaporation, creating a framework to share water between districts and encouraging farmers to conserve water.

"We really all do have a shared vision, we're just looking at it from different perspectives," said Shon Rae, deputy managing director for the Central Oregon Irrigation District.

While a series of inter-agency studies and planning on the Deschutes basin have fostered more collaboration between environmental groups and irrigation districts in recent years, that hasn't always been the case. A series of dams and irrigation needs on the Upper Deschutes have caused water to flow at radically different levels during different seasons.

The fluctuation contributes to ecological challenges on the river, including erosion, habitat loss and channel widening, according to Shaun Pigott, president of Deschutes Redbands, a chapter of Trout Unlimited. Snyder and Pigott agreed that there was once a tendency for environmental groups to see irrigation districts as an obstacle rather than an ally.

In perhaps the most

infamous battle between irrigation districts and environmental groups, a series of lawsuits on behalf of the Oregon spotted frog led to a 2016 settlement mandating that water levels in parts of the Upper Deschutes can't drop below certain thresholds.

Both Pigott and Snyder

said their views on irrigation districts have evolved over time. As Snyder has worked more with the irrigation districts, she said, she has come to understand the role that irrigation plays in the basin, and how best to work to return the river to a more natural state.

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