



Cherise Kaechele/The Observer

Piles of snow are dumped where there's room throughout La Grande. The region is expected to receive more snow in the coming days.

SNOW

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surprise, though. Rock said he knows when the snow comes, they're going to be busy.

"If people don't need to be out then don't be out," Rock said to would-be travelers. "Make sure your vehicles are prepared for the snow. Good traction tires and proper devices to make sure you get to the place you need to go are vital."

Nelson, at Goss Motors, said its AAA service isn't necessarily busier, but it is taking his employees longer to complete the jobs.

"There have been road closures and we're sitting (waiting) when our trucks would normally be running," Nelson said.

He said those jobs his drivers get called for can take them to Portland and Boise and other cities where there's a long drive ahead.

Otherwise, they're responding to a lot of slide-offs, recoveries, rollovers and other snow-related accidents.

"Probably in the last couple of days, we've responded to slide-offs more often than not," he said.

Nelson also has advice to ensure travelers get to their destinations safely.

"If you're on the freeway, you're going to still get there even if you go slow," he said. "You don't have to go 100 mph. Usually, the (wrecked cars we are responding to) were probably going too fast. Slow down."

La Grande Police Lt. Gary Bell said when the roads are bad, one thing law enforcement always sees is a rise in hit and runs.

"Hit and runs happen any time, but when we have inclement street conditions, they'll drive away (from the accident)," he said. "It always coincides with street conditions."

Kyle Carpenter, La Grande Public

Works director, said this winter hadn't been that busy up until this month.

"It's been an incredible February," he said. "We usually don't see snow like this (so late in the winter)."

Carpenter said because the weather earlier this winter was lighter, it left the public works department a "pretty healthy budget" to use for this month's snow.

Despite February's back-to-back snowstorms, snow removal has gone smoothly.

"We try to get to the busy streets early on so they'll be empty," he said. "We try to hit the residential streets later."

The snow removal plan, which is posted on the City of La Grande's website, begins when there is six inches of snow on the ground and more is forecasted. The plan states when "snowfall is between four and six inches, it will be necessary to remove slush during periods of rapid melting."

The snow removal plan prioritizes the roadways in the city, Carpenter said in a previous interview. The hospital's emergency routes are the first priority listed in the plan, followed by the "arterial, Central Business District and major roads and intersections." Those major roads and intersections include Spruce Street, Jefferson Avenue, Adams Avenue, Second Street and Fourth Street. The first and second priorities for the department covers 25 miles, he said.

The third and last priorities are residential streets and alleys. Carpenter said residential roadways can be hard to get to, and in the event of a major snowfall, it is unlikely the public works department would have the time or resources to plow them. ■

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HEMP

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county has existing hemp growers and has received an application for the seed handling and processing of seed and oil sales. Industrial use processing in Union County requires a CUP when it comes to farm use, which is reviewed by the Planning Commission.

According to the Lindseys' application, they hope to employ four to eight people for lab work, and 10 to 15 people during harvest.

They intend to farm the hemp from seed to processing. There will be minimal odors and their general hours of operation will be 12 hours a day.

"We will be working with other farmers in Union,

Wallowa, Baker, Umatilla and Grant counties," according to the Lindseys' CUP application. "The final products can be shipping international. I plan on selling to brands that are already established in the market, and producing my own products (CBD lotions, capsules, CBD drops and edibles)."

The application will be reviewed in March. ■



EOU Outdoor Adventure Program photo

Hells Canyon is the deepest river gorge in North America, according to the U.S. Forest Service website.

CANYON

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first of many service projects the Outdoor Adventure Program will be a part of. Hatch envisions some students doing work like this for graduation capstone projects in the future.

The Alternative Spring Break students will be led on the trail work project by Dylan Howell, a member of the Outdoor Adventure Program's staff.

In addition to the work, students will have opportunities to enjoy activities like rock climbing and paddle boarding.

The Hells Canyon Alternative Spring Break is open only to Eastern students. For additional information contact Holeman at eholeman@eou.edu. Students can sign up at the Outdoor Adventure Program office in the Hoke Union Building, Room 118. March 15 is the sign-up deadline. ■

TAXES

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their tax return the most was the changes in deductions.

"We have a lot of expenses that (my husband's) job does not cover. We counted on the federal deductions. We counted on that to reduce our tax burden," she said.

The change in tax law is called the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and was enacted in December of 2017. It affected tax brackets as well as making changes to withholdings and eliminating some tax deductions. Taxpayers should have started seeing changes in their withholdings on their paychecks in late February of 2018, as it changed the way that employers hold back taxes, according to the IRS website.

However, some taxpayers may end up owing large amounts as a result of not being aware of the changes to withholdings. In order to ensure that the correct amount is being withheld, employees should have filed an updated W-4 form with their employer, ac-

ording to the IRS website, which provides a withholding calculator to help taxpayers determine how best to fill out their W-4.

In a video entitled "Message to Taxpayers" from the IRS, Chuck Rettig, the commissioner of the IRS, addressed the issue: "With so many changes in the tax law, you may see a different amount in your refund or tax bill when you file. If you want to adjust that amount for 2019, please visit our withholding calculator on IRS.gov as soon as possible for a paycheck checkup."

Rettig also directed taxpayers to a new section on the IRS website dedicated to the changes and reminded those who owe money that even if they can't pay the full amount, they should file their taxes on time to avoid penalties.

"Remember, it's always a good idea to check your tax withholding every year, especially if you made adjustments last year, or if you have any financial or life changes," he said.

Currently, the IRS has issued 16 percent fewer tax re-

turns than last year, and tax returns issued have been 8.7 percent smaller than those issued last year, according to The Associated Press.

An article on the Motley Fool, an online stock adviser, suggests that despite the fact that many Americans count on their refund as a source of extra income, the best tax refund is as close as possible to zero. A very small refund or none at all means the correct withholdings were filed and the taxpayer did not pay money out of their paycheck unnecessarily. ■

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