

TRAVEL

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by car.

But Saturday marks the winter solstice and the beginning of traveling season, it also brings the risk of snow, ice and plenty of potential problems on the road.

Marc Austin, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Pendleton, said a low pressure system is spreading across the Western United States and the region in the coming days, which is likely to bring more “active and disturbed” weather as the holidays approach.

“We’re very confident we’ll get some winter weather up in the mountains in the coming days,” Austin said. “The mountain passes could see substantial snowfall that impacts travel.”

At lower elevations, however, most of the weather system’s precipitation will remain south of the region and odds of snow during the holidays are small.

“For those hoping for the chance of a white Christmas, it doesn’t look likely,” Austin said. “But I won’t say it’s zero.”

Austin said there’s a higher chance of rain, and either way, Pendleton is unlikely to come close to its record Christmas Day snowfall of 4 inches from 1933. Temperatures in the region will remain around the average for the holiday season, he said, which is from the low-20s to the high-30s.

Austin stressed the Weather Service’s forecast loses some of its reliability when looking more than five days ahead, but said for now the weather looks like it will remain “active” in the week after Christmas.

While snow and ice may not be the biggest concerns for Eastern Oregon travelers this holiday season, the cold conditions still can pose problems.

According to AAA’s report, the organization is expecting to respond to more than 853,000 drivers nationally and 12,500 in Oregon throughout the holidays. A majority of these calls are to assist with dead batteries, flat tires or somebody who locked themselves out of the car.

Bobby Jarvie, a manager at Pendleton’s Premium Tire and Lube, said tires are more susceptible to losing air pressure during the cold nights and it’s important to check that the car’s fluids are properly filled and mixed with winter freeze protection.

The Force is strong in Union County



Staff photo by Phil Wright

Star Wars and movie fans fill the 165-seat cinema at the Granada Theatre in downtown La Grande for the Thursday night first showing of “Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker,” the ninth and final episode in the “Skywalker Saga.” The film space opera began with a summer blockbuster in 1977, creating a movie fandom unlike any before and leaving an indelible mark on modern culture. Does anyone have to explain what’s a lightsaber or The Force? Nope. That’s because of Star Wars.

VOLCANO

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reported all victims at Whakatane Hospital had burns covering at least 30% of their bodies and 22 victims initially required airway support.

Valentine said patients needed intubation and ventilators to help them breathe, but there was not enough equipment to go around. Whakatane Hospital reached out to other facilities for burn treatment supplies and transferred some patients to larger hospitals.

He said the worst cases went to Christchurch, a city of about 380,000 on the South Island where there is a major burn treatment center. According to the Herald, in the hours after the eruption, 29 patients were under intensive care in Christchurch and at New Zealand’s three other burn units, at Middlemore, Waikato and Hutt Valley.

“Fixed wing aircraft and helicopters were flying patients out all night,” Eric Valentine said.

Matt Valentine grew up in La Grande and graduated from La Grande High School in 1989. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1994 and from Oregon Health & Science University, Portland, in 1999. He practiced medicine in Florence on the Oregon Coast for five years before moving to New Zealand in 2008 to take his position at Whakatane Hospital.

Dr. John Bonning, president of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, also treated burn patients



Photo by New Zealand Police

Police divers prepare to search the waters near White Island off the coast of Whakatane, New Zealand, Saturday, Dec. 14. A team of nine from the Police National Dive Squad resumed their search early Saturday for a body seen in the water following the Dec. 9 volcanic eruption.

injured in the eruption. He told the New Zealand Herald as he wheeled patients into Waikato Hospital after the eruption he could smell the sulfur coming from their clothing and saw “bits of dead skin” and “broken ash” peeling off their bodies.

“It was awful, just horrific,” he said.

“Saying it was like a war zone would not be an understatement.”

His comments came as New Zealand authorities imported 120 square meters of skin from the United States and Australia to help treat the victims’ terrible burn injuries. The Herald reported that equates to about 60 donors — in New Zealand only five to 10 people donate skin each year.

The demand for blood and plasma also increased dramatically since the eruption, Sarah Morley, chief medical officer at New Zealand Blood Service, told the Herald. And Heather Cleland, plastic surgeon and director of the Victorian Adult Burns Service, said the biggest challenge for treating patients with severe burns was fluid loss, resuscitation and protection of the airways.

“Once fluid loss occurs, the blood pressure starts to drop and the person will go into shock, so resuscitation and inserting (an) intravenous line is crucial to avoid organ failure,” Cleland said. “The other issue is inhalation and protection of the airway, which can block off, creating a very dangerous situation. People often require a tube to be put down into their lungs to keep the airway open so the patient can still breathe basically.”

Bonning also took to other New Zealand media to praise the staff at Whakatane Hospital.

“Whakatane did supremely well,” he said. “They received more critical care patients in 12 hours than they usually see in nearly 12 months.”

FEES

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temporary restaurants will be \$51 for a single day event and \$72 for a seasonal or multi-day event. The inspection fee for tourist facilities will be \$83, and the fee for pools and spas will be \$221 for the first one and \$110 for the second.

The fee structure also reduces the costs for some new restaurant owners. Presently, anyone launching a restaurant in Union County must pay a full fee regardless of when they open. Beginning in January, anyone who opens a restaurant after Oct. 1 will pay half of the annual restaurant license fee.

The Center for Human Development proposed the new fees to encourage restaurant owners to open their businesses late in the year instead of waiting for the beginning of the year to avoid paying a full fee with only a month left in the year.

Commissioner Donna Beverage said she does not like raising fees but understands the increase is necessary for CHD to cover its costs. She noted the fee increase will put what CHD charges for Environmental Health Services in line with what is charged in other counties in the region.

“The fees will be comparable,” Beverage said.

She also asked the center to come to the county earlier when it sees the need to make fee increases so the change can be more gradual and prevent a major one-time jump.

The county board also addressed a funding request from the Eastern Oregon Film Festival.

Chris Jennings, director of the film festival, asked the county to provide \$7,800 to help fund the event in 2020, an increase of \$4,300 from what the county provided in 2019.

Jennings said the three-day festival, which has run in La Grande for the past 10 years, is on its way to becoming an event that can set La Grande apart from other communities. He stressed the event has the potential to bring in an increasing number of people throughout the region, thus boosting La Grande’s economy.

The commissioners made a motion to provide the Eastern Oregon Film Festival with \$6,000 in 2020. The commissioners will vote on this motion at the Jan. 8 meeting.

ART

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imagination. The first painting is of a realistic wheat fields that portray Ng’s life in Colfax, Washington. The other is a stylized version of the Oregon Coast. Ng created both in an attempt to capture the nostalgia she has for the areas.

“I wanted the viewer to be able to feel as if they were reminiscing even though the two pieces are so different stylistically,” Ng said.

Murrell said she wanted to put students’ works on display because it helps them create their identity as an artist and helps in creating culture rather than just consuming it through art. Students said they were happy to have their art in front of the public.

“I am always grateful to have my work on display,” Edwards said. “As an artist, getting the opportunity to display artwork in a public setting is a precious thing. Opportunities like that do not happen every day. When it does happen, it provides



Staff photo Sabrina Thompson

Mary Edwards poses with her screen print “Honey,” honoring her grandmother, who died a month ago.

one with a sense of success and confidence to continue on with one’s work.”

The artwork will be on display until Feb. 20, 2020, at the library.

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