

Small-business & Ag HAPPENINGS

Construction safety summit coming to Central Oregon

SALEM — The 19th annual Mid-Oregon Construction Safety Summit, a two-day conference in Central Oregon that will focus on the safety and health of workers in residential, commercial and industrial construction, will take place Jan. 27-28 in Bend. Fall protection, personal protective equipment silica hazards and electrical safety are among the included topics.

Training sessions, from Oregon OSHA training for construction to work zone safety and flagging will be available to those who attend, and they will be able to attain certifications or recertifications. An opportunity to earn continuing education credits through Oregon's Construction Contractors Board and Landscape Contractors Board will also be offered.

Matt Pomerinke of Longview, Washington, will deliver the keynote presentation, "Accidents are Forever," Jan. 28. Pomerinke, who at 21 years old had his arm amputated below the elbow following a lumber mill accident, shares his story now to help prevent similar accidents.

Other workshops include:

- Excavation safety and soil classification
- Fall prevention
- Safety leadership and culture
- Cool tools and apps for construction
- What to expect from an Oregon OSHA enforcement inspection
- Multi-employer worksites
- Heat stress and Total Worker Health
- Safety meetings
- Marijuana and the workplace

Registration for pre-conference workshops on Jan. 27 is \$50. The Jan. 28 conference is \$85. Registration for the OSHA 10-hour training for construction is \$140 for both days. And the cost of attending the silica competent person workshop on Jan. 27 is \$75.

To register, go to <http://safetyseries.cvent.com/summit20>. For questions or help registering, call the Oregon OSHA Conference Section at 503-947-7411.

Oregon taxpayers changing their state withholding must use Oregon's OR-W-4 form

SALEM — Oregon taxpayers who are making changes to state withholding must use a form OR-W-4, according to the Oregon Department of Revenue. The new federal Form W-4 cannot be used for Oregon withholdings as it doesn't use allowances, and Oregon withholding is calculated using allowances.

Prior Oregon or federal withholding statements used for Oregon withholding can remain if the taxpayer doesn't change their withholding elections.

"We encourage Oregon taxpayers to check their withholding for tax year 2020," Personal Tax and Compliance Division Administrator JoAnn Martin said in a press release from ODR. "Not withholding enough during the year could lead to an unexpected tax bill in 2021."

A Form OR-W-4 should be provided by employers to employees when an employee gives them a new federal Form W-4.

Taxpayers who are more at risk for withholding too little include those who:

- Started a new job in 2019 or later.
- Updated their federal Form W-4 in 2018 or 2019.
- Previously claimed federal deductions that were impacted by federal tax law changes, such as the employee business expense deduction.
- Live in a two-earner household.

Taxpayers can find Form OR-W-4 and determine the correct amount to withhold by using the online withholding calculator on the department's website at www.oregon.gov/dor.

Tax season officially opens Jan. 27

LA GRANDE — The IRS has confirmed Jan. 27 as the first day the tax agency will accept and begin processing 2019 tax returns.

The deadline to file tax returns for 2019 and pay any owed taxes is April 15, which this year fall on a Wednesday.

More than 150 million individual tax returns are expected to be filed, according to a press release from the IRS.

Taxpayers may prepare returns through the IRS's Free File program or tax software companies and tax professionals before the start date, but processing returns will begin after IRS systems open later in January.



Photo by Tim Hiatt

Washington beekeepers are shown harvesting honey. A new honeybee nemesis, the Asian giant hornet, has buzzed onto the scene in Washington state — an invasive species capable of decimating honeybee populations.

Hornets' presence cause for concern for beekeepers

By Sierra Dawn McClain
Capital Press

BLAINE, Washington — As if life wasn't hard enough for the honeybee, things just got worse with the appearance of a new hornet that can decimate hives.

While honeybees in North America face many foes such as lethal varroa mites, a new nemesis buzzed onto the scene in Washington state — an invasive species capable of decimating honeybee populations, reducing crop pollination and stinging humans.

The pest is the Asian giant hornet. According to entomologists, it is indigenous to Asia, where it has many names: commander wasp, yak-killer hornet and tiger head bee.

The hornets are distinguishable by their yellow heads, long bodies and three-inch wingspans.

The hornets prey on other insects, feeding pulped bugs to their larvae.

Where similar species of hornets are established in Europe, they have wiped out 30% of beehives, reduced honey production by two-thirds and dramatically slashed crop production due to lack of pollination, according to Washington State Department of Agriculture public engagement specialist

Karla Salp.

A typical Asian giant hornet is five times the size of a honeybee and can kill up to 40 bees per minute, according to Tim Hiatt, commercial beekeeper and a member of the Washington State Beekeepers Association.

"No one knows what triggers it, but sometimes they literally go into slaughter phase, decapitating bee after bee and eating their bodies," said Salp. "It takes 20 hornets to kill an entire hive in one to six hours."

PROBABLE SIGHTINGS

The first Asian giant hornet sightings recorded in the U.S. were Dec. 8 by a resident of Blaine, Washington, just south of the state's border with Canada. They had previously been confirmed at three sites in British Columbia.

Since then, WSDA has received 80 new sighting reports, three of which they deem probable. One was from a Bellingham beekeeper.

"Since these hornets are normally dormant in the winter, it's unusual to find them active this time of year," said Salp. "It's probably because the winters are milder here, so they're surviving better. It seems the Pacific Northwest is their ideal environment."

HITCHHIKING HORNETS

All it takes to establish a new colony is one mated female, said Salp. And to invade a new location, a queen hornet just needs to do a little hitchhiking.

"Honeybees are mobile," said beekeeper Hiatt. Bees are shipped across the U.S. to pollinate crops. Three-quarters of all managed beehives are shipped to California in February to pollinate almonds.

At the border, California Border Protection Stations, or as Hiatt calls them, "bug stations," inspect for pests. In summer, finding stowaway hornets would be easy, said Hiatt. But in winter, when hornets are dormant, finding one tucked inside a pallet is nearly impossible.

Experts say it will take everyone working together to stop the spread.

"This is a good citizen-scientist moment," said Laura Lavine, chair of Washington State University's entomology department. "Everyone can pitch in."

IF YOU'RE A BEEKEEPER

According to entomologists, Asian honeybees have developed natural defense instincts. When a hornet invades, honeybees

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Idaho lawmakers plan legislation on hemp

By Ximena Bustillo
Idaho Statesman

BOISE, Idaho — It was 2018, and after years of running a successful business in the Boise area — Same Day Electric — Patty Fletcher and her husband, Randy, wanted a change of pace.

They landed on what might seem like an odd choice: farming. And then landed on hemp, which they found to be one of the most versatile options.

"We have lived in Boise for about 25 years. We still have a home in Boise," Patty Fletcher told the Idaho Statesman. "... We looked at different places and what kind of crop we wanted to grow, and found out about hemp."

There was just one big problem: Idaho doesn't allow the cultivating or selling of hemp. But its next-door neighbor, Oregon, does.

So the Fletchers sold their Garden City electric business, founded a 30-acre farm in Vale and began working by hand to ensure a harvest for this fall.

"It was really challenging because it is a new industry, but it



EO Media Group file photo

Hemp hangs in a Quonset hut at a farm east of Joseph. Some Idahoans are crossing the border to Oregon to farm hemp as Idaho is one of just three states that doesn't allow the crop's cultivation, though lawmakers are considering a change.

has been great. We found a buyer who was interested in all of it," Patty Fletcher said. "Hemp is a profitable product, so it is

twofold: We could buy the farm, make it work financially; plus we're growing something that we really believed in."

If the state of Idaho starts believing in hemp, people like the Fletchers might not have to

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