

IMPACTS

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Inc., La Grande, are suspending disconnects and waiving late fees during this crisis. Charter and EONI are offering free wifi at their offices. “With everything else breaking, we don’t need the internet to be another thing that isn’t working,” said Jeff Crews, vice president of EONI.

The companies are following the Federal Com-

munications Commission’s pledge to keep America connected.

The pledge to now terminate service to any residential or small business customers because of their inability to pay their bills due to coronavirus disruptions, waive late fees because of their economic circumstances related to the pandemic and open Wi-Fi hotspots to any American who needs them is valid for 60 days from Friday at this time.

STORES

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and often not complete.

“It is having difficulty keeping up,” Rennie said.

He said wholesalers are telling him the demand for products is up more than 100% and wholesalers are having a hard time keeping up with demand for logistical reasons, which include not only a lack of truck drivers but also a shortage of trucks. And wholesalers are having a hard time getting enough of certain product to ship, including toilet paper, rubbing alcohol and sanitizers, Rennie said.

Derrick Erickson, Market Place’s produce manager, said there has not been panic buying at his store but customers have been stocking up.

“There have been more filled baskets,” Erickson said.

Some have been panic buying

At Short Stop Xtreme — which features a small grocery store, a Skippers restaurant and frozen yogurt shop, and a fuel station — co-owner Fred Bell Jr. does not foresee any shortages. He said deliveries of produce and products continue to be on time, but he is ready for any hiccups. Bell explained he has three to four months of inventory built up.

“We saw this coming,” said Bell, who owns Short Stop Xtreme with his wife, Tara.

He said he has seen some panic buying, including an increase in the purchase of tobacco products and gasoline. But Bell said he believes there is no reason to worry about a gas availability problem.

“There will not be a shortage of gasoline. There is too much of a supply,” he said.

The Short Stop’s yogurt shop and Skippers restaurant was hit for a loop Monday when Gov. Kate Brown announced that all dine-in restaurants must close. The Short Stop will be able to continue operating the drive-through Skipper’s portion of its restaurant. Still he anticipates that his business

will be hurt.

“That (the dine-in portion of his restaurant) was 80% of our business (at Skippers),” he said.

To help offset this, Bell hopes to start a Skippers delivery service next week once he gets a mobile credit machine set up.

“A lot of people do not feel comfortable going out (because of COVID-19),” Bell said.

Adjusting for social distancing

At Grocery Outlet, Randy and Michelle Willson said business has been so brisk the staff is having to work extra hours. To make customers feel more comfortable in the wake of more crowded conditions created by the extra business, the Willsons on Monday began opening at 6 a.m., three hours earlier than usual. This gives people a time to shop when there are fewer people present and makes it easier for them to maintain the recommended “social distance” of 6 feet from other people to best protect them from spreading COVID-19.

This is among many steps Grocery Outlet and stores throughout the area are taking to protect shoppers. At Market Place Fresh Foods, Rennie said samples of cut fruits and vegetables are no longer readily available for customers to try. Samples, though, are being provided upon request.

In addition, employees at Market Place and elsewhere are wearing plastic gloves, including anyone who handles money.

“We are taking steps to make as safe an environment for people as we possibly can,” he said.

The Market Place closed its rooftop dining area, its dining room and its bar. The store is doing its best to offer a family dining experience, continuing with its new program, Fresh Takes, which are boxed meals for four that customers cook at home.

Colkitt said at Union Market he has encountered people trying to hoard items. For example, recently a man asked for 100 pounds of hamburger, but Colkitt limited him to 10.

Finances

Old West Federal Credit Union, which serves Grant, Baker, Union, Walla, Umatilla, Morrow, Wheeler and Harney counties, is one of many banks offering emergency loan assistance and adjustments on loans. As a member-owned cooperative, Old West FCU can offer skip days on loan payments and address issues on a case-by-case basis.

Old West CEO Ken Olson and Moran said with the advancements in tech-

nology in banking the situation is different than the financial crisis of 2008, even if there are similarities in the stock market trends. With online banking almost universally used, and ways to get money without person-to-person interaction, Olson said there isn’t a need to pull money out of accounts out of fear of not having access. Community Bank will close access to lobbies effective Monday, March 23, but Moran said there is plenty of options for accessing money.

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According to a new study by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the National Institute on Aging, men and women with hearing loss are much more likely to develop dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. People with severe hearing loss, the study reports, were 5 times more likely to develop dementia than those with normal hearing.

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-2011 Study by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the National Institute on Aging

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- ☐ Y ☐ N

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- ☐ Y ☐ N

☐ Is it hard to follow the conversation in noisy places like parties, crowded restaurants or family get-togethers?
- ☐ Y ☐ N

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