

Oregon DMV detours around phone logjam, gets more time for Real ID licenses

By Peter Wong
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon Driver and Motor Vehicle Services had bad news and good news for customers stemming from the coronavirus pandemic.

The bad news was that DMV's initial effort to reopen its field offices after a 10-week shutdown hit a roadblock — and not the physical kind.

The good news is that DMV was able to get around it quickly — and that more than 3.1 million Oregon drivers will have up to 15 months, instead of three, to obtain the kind of licenses enabling them to board commercial aircraft.

Assistant Director Travis Brouwer of the Oregon Department of Transportation, DMV's parent agency, spoke about both this week at a virtual meeting of the Legislature's Joint Committee on Transportation.

In the first hour after telephone lines were opened June 1, DMV got 18,000 calls — the normal call volume is 1,000 per day — and DMV shut down the lines soon afterward.

"We were faced with a deluge of calls we did not anticipate," Brouwer said.

But with help from its computer systems vendor, DMV put up a substitute: An online form for people to request in-person appointments, with specific times, at their local field office.

Of the 60 field offices, 38 were able to reopen June 3 to provide limited services. All but six were closed since March 25, after the first of Gov. Kate Brown's executive orders during the coronavirus pandemic — and those six were limited to commercial driver licenses.

In a second phase, 57 field offices will reopen by Monday, June 22, for limited services. All 60 offices will reopen by Aug. 3 with all services.

Many DMV services can be done online or via mail. A new computer system will enable DMV to expand that list.

But renewals of regular drivers' licenses require people to come in for new photos, and for those 60 and

older, vision tests.

Vehicle registrations can be renewed online or by mail. But for people in the Portland metro area or Jackson County, their vehicles must undergo inspections by the Department of Environmental Quality at stations now scheduled to reopen June 15 and 16.

Drive tests for first-time license applicants and others also require in-person appointments. The tests usually are conducted by DMV vendors, but Brouwer said vendors are unavailable in some areas of Oregon.

The pandemic did have one unanticipated effect.

Oregon faced a deadline of Oct. 1 for licenses compliant with the Real ID Act, a 2005 federal law whose goal is to make state drivers' licenses more secure. Some of the hijackers involved in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the East Coast used drivers' licenses to board commercial aircraft.

Oregon DMV will proceed with its plan to start issuing compliant licenses on July 1.

But Oregon's deadline for compliance with the federal law is now Oct. 1, 2021. ODOT's Brouwer said the delay will give DMV 15 months, instead of three months, and many drivers now can opt to obtain the new licenses when their renewal time comes.

"As a result, it will significantly reduce that surge of customers we were predicting in the field offices," he said.

The compliant licenses will be required when state licenses are used for federal purposes, such as boarding commercial aircraft or entering federal buildings.

Oregon will begin issuing noncompliant licenses starting Jan. 1, when House Bill 2015 takes effect. That law does away with the requirement that drivers show proof of legal presence in the United States to obtain a state drivers' license, although drivers must pass the other tests. These licenses cannot be used for federal purposes and must be marked to that effect.

Colleges and universities prepare for COVID reopening

By Teresa Carson
Pamplin Media Group

College life will look a lot different when students return to school in the fall, with students being asked to stay 6 feet apart and many traditional campus activities off limits.

"The guidelines make it very clear" that campus life will indeed be different this fall, Ben Cannon, executive director of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, said.

College classrooms have to follow general pandemic capacity guidelines for their locations. That means no more than 25 people in a room for counties in the Phase 1 opening category and no more than 50 people for all other counties. Colleges must rearrange classrooms to allow 6 feet of social distancing and 35 square feet per person of space.

That's going to make the big lecture classes with hundreds of students crammed together off limits for the duration of the pandemic. Stadiums filled with screaming football or basketball fans are out. Arts performances will have to be rejiggered.

If 6 feet of distancing

isn't possible, plastic or other barriers are to be used and face masks required. Face coverings are recommended even for spaces where distancing is achieved.

The guidelines, issued Friday by the commission, were crafted with the Oregon Health Authority and apply to all public colleges including community colleges and went into effect Sunday. They are designed to help tamp down the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic which already has killed more than 170 Oregonians.

Cannon said "each college and university will have the flexibility to determine when students may return to campus."

The new guidelines said that for colleges with residential students, dorm rooms can't have more than two students and must allow 64 square feet per resident.

Cannon said that most typical double dorm rooms would still be able to accommodate two students, but most triples would probably have to be reduced to two residents.

"We don't know yet what residence hall interest levels will be," he said.

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To the GRH Regional Medical Clinic team as a Primary Care Provider (PCP)

Tracey Tracy, MD, joins the GRH Regional Medical Clinic primary care team from a family medicine clinic in Clackamas, Oregon. She attended medical school at Oregon Health & Sciences University in Portland, and completed her residency with Providence Milwaukie Family Medicine. Dr. Tracy welcomes patients of all ages and gender identities from infants to seniors, and enjoys taking care of multi-generational families. Her goal is to partner with each patient to achieve optimal management of their chronic health conditions and focus on preventive medicine. In her free time, you'll find Dr. Tracy outdoors. She loves cycling, hiking, golfing, snowshoeing, travel, and exercises daily as well. She spent her childhood in eastern Oregon, then lived in Europe and in the Midwest. After spending over 20 years in the Portland metro area, Dr. Tracy is excited to be back on the sunnier and drier side of the state. Join us in welcoming Dr. Tracy to the Grande Ronde Valley!



Tracey Tracy, MD

GRH Regional Medical Clinic

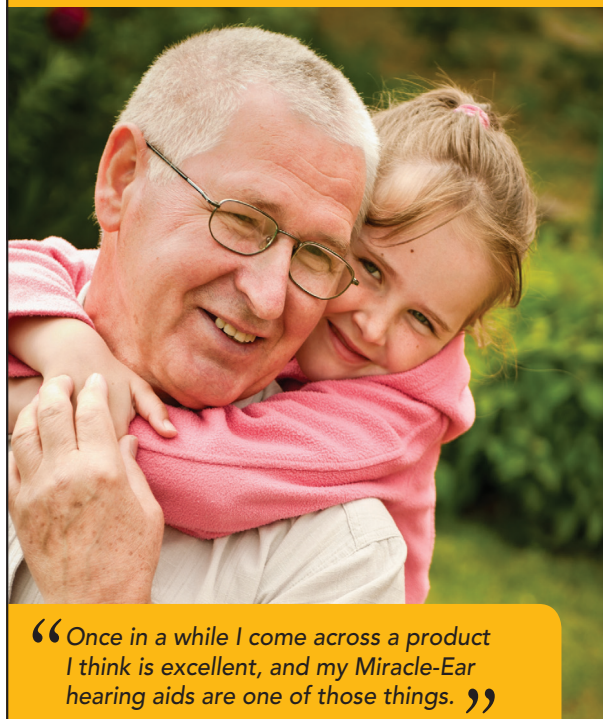
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