

COMPLAINTS

Continued from Page 1A

carries a minimum penalty of \$8,900 and a maximum of \$126,749.

Of the eight complaints in the county, four were in Enterprise, three were in Joseph and one in Wallowa. Four were food-service establishments, three were grocery stores and one a retail store.

Because all are under investigation, the EO Media Group withheld the names of the businesses. However, several business owners — not necessarily targets of complaints — were willing to discuss their own efforts to comply with state mandates on masks and distancing and how

well their customers complied.

“All of our employees are doing everything they’re supposed to do,” said Teresa Sajonia, owner of The Embers Brew House & Pub in Joseph. “Our customers are amazing. I haven’t had any problems. They come in the business with their masks on when they need to use the restroom and we’re not doing any indoor seating right now; everything is outdoors only. We have just chosen to do it that way; it’s beautiful weather — we’ve got until October, right?”

Richelle Chitwood, owner of Central Copy, Enterprise, said not only has she taken measures to comply with the state mandates, she’s finding customers quite willing to comply, as well.

“I put a sign up explaining the

repercussions and since I’ve done that, I’ve had no problems,” Chitwood said. “When people see that, it’s like, ‘I didn’t know that.’ People realize it’s not a personal or political sign. People don’t want to see a business get fined.”

Sometimes customers are reluctant to cooperate.

“If someone were to come in and say, ‘I’m not wearing a mask,’ you have to say ‘Wear a mask or step outside.’ There’s just no other choice,” Sajonia said.

Some food-service establishments — such as The Embers and M. Crow in Lostine — have abandoned indoor seating during the pandemic.

“We don’t have any indoor seating now. People wear a mask when they come in and then go

outside to eat,” said Nolan Davis, an employee at M. Crow. “For us, it’s a lot easier because we converted our display window to a walk-up counter so people don’t have to wear masks there.”

Mike Hayward, general manager at Wallowa County Grain Growers, said employee actions can set a good example for customers.

“Having our employees masked up is a big part of getting customers to comply,” he said.

He said customers are generally quite compliant about the regulations.

“I’ve been pleasantly surprised. It’s been getting a lot better,” he said. “Initially there was some resistance ... when it became mandatory ... when all businesses

were trying enforce the regulations, but now it’s really gotten pretty good.”

He said Grain Growers — like many businesses — will offer a mask to customers or they can use a call box out front.

“I haven’t heard of anyone flat-out refusing (to wear a mask),” he said. “I think it’s pretty high compliance.”

Some merchants, including some on the OSHA complaints list, declined to comment. Others are certain the regulations are more than about just the pandemic.

“Everybody’s cooperating with what’s going on,” said Gary Bethscheider, owner of the Stubborn Mule in Joseph. “In November, after the elections, this’ll all go away.”

HURRICANE

Continued from Page 1A

Grande. “My biggest fear was that the entire roof would collapse.”

Compounding the miserable situation was the sound of Hurricane Camille and the tornadoes it spawned.

“It was deafening,” said Tarpy, who was sheltering with her first husband, Terry McDaniel, and other relatives and friends.

Fortunately the roaring winds and the rainfall subsided as the hurricane moved on about 20 minutes later, and the floodwater in the bowling alley, which reached the edge of the snack shop, began receding. Not knowing if it was safe to leave, Tarpy and her group remained in the building’s snack center.

After a wait of almost 20 hours, officials told the bowling center party it could go outside if everyone was extremely careful. Tarpy and her group left money behind for the food they had eaten while waiting out the long hours.

Walking outside was a rude awakening. There were shattered buildings, downed power lines, numerous cars with windows blown and dead bodies. Military barracks were all around the area, and the west walls of all of them were missing.

“It looked like a bomb had gone off,” Tarpy recalled.



Photo contributed by Nancy Tarpy

Hurricane Camille 51 years ago devastated this house in Long Beach, Mississippi, where a friend of Nancy Tarpy of La Grande lived. Tarpy was 18 at the time and lived in Gulfport, Mississippi, where she and seven others took refuge in a bowling alley to survive.

assigned the unenviable task of removing dead bodies.

The ones he helped recover were among the approximately 250 people the hurricane killed during its devastating run through Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama and the East Coast. Those who died in Gulfport included a man who tied himself and his young son to a bridge to keep themselves from being blown away.

“(Their bodies) were never found,” Tarpy said.

Gulfport was without electricity for weeks following the hurricane, which meant there was no refrigeration. The only ice available was at an ice plant that had insulated blocks. The plant’s supplies soon sold out, causing tempers to flare.

“There was a knife fight involving two men trying to get the last block of ice,” she said.

Once Tarpy and a friend spotted a milk truck that had a working refrigeration unit. They bought at least a quart of chocolate milk and consumed it on the spot.

“That was the best milk I ever tasted,” Tarpy said. “It

was like a delicacy.”

Martial law and an evening curfew were in place in the days following the disaster.

“People out past it were arrested,” she said. “They really cracked down.”

About two weeks after the hurricane, Tarpy, whose husband by then had been deployed to Vietnam, drove to Kansas City, Missouri, to stay with his parents. Tarpy drove her 1964 Impala. The storm left the car with no windows on its driver’s side, a windshield so pitted by rock damage it was difficult to see out of, and headlights that only worked when the high beams were on.

A police officer stopped Tarpy in Alabama to warn her of a bad tire. When he saw her blown-out windows he became suspicious.

“He thought I had stolen the car,” Tarpy said.

Amazingly, when she told him Hurricane Camille had damaged the car, the officer said he didn’t know about the storm. She convinced the officer that she had not stolen the vehicle when she showed him her vehicle registration.

After this, the police officer led Tarpy to a shop to get her tire replaced because of his concern for her safety.

Tarpy said she was not popular with drivers at night because only her high beams worked. A generous truck driver solved her problem when he suggested Tarpy follow closely behind him so his vehicle could block her high beams. She did, and made it to Kansas City safely.

Tarpy moved to La Grande in 2002 with her second husband, Cliff Tarpy, to whom she has been married 42 years. The couple moved here to be with family.

Today when Nancy Tarpy reflects back upon her Hurricane Camille experience, she shudders when thinking about how close she came to possible death.

“I was given a second chance,” she said.

It is a second opportunity that has helped her never to take anything for granted.

“It gave me a whole new perspective on life,” Tarpy said.

SHERIFF

Continued from Page 1A

Bureau, said it also is important to look into and consider the matters around the sheriff’s office deputy reserve fund.

Rasmussen attended the meeting in Salem in person but said nothing.

Marsha Morin, criminal justice certification program manager for Safety Standards and Training, afterward said the investigation will be thorough.

“DPSST is now conducting an investigation, requesting all records and conducting our review,” she said. “Our review, once we receive all the information, consists of determining if a moral fitness violation exists and either sending a recommendation for closure or a determination on action to the policy committee based on what we’ve found.”

If there was no moral fitness violation or not enough evidence to prove a violation, the committee will recommend closing the case. If the committee finds there is enough evidence to show Rasmussen committed the violations, the committee will make a recommendation and vote on whether Rasmussen retains his police certification, the state stamp of approval for someone to serve as a law enforcement officer in Oregon. Rasmussen could face a suspension for a number of years or even a lifetime revocation of the certification.

The Police Policy Committee’s next meeting is Nov. 19.

Rasmussen has been sheriff in Union County since 2005 and was seeking a fifth term. He

JUST THE FACTS

The Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training is conducting an investigation into Union County Sheriff Boyd Rasmussen. The department is looking at two issues:

- How Rasmussen managed the sheriff’s office reserve deputy fund.
- The pay Rasmussen retained for providing law enforcement services for Elgin while working as sheriff.

The investigation’s findings could result in Rasmussen losing his state-approved police certification.

announced Aug. 12 he is withdrawing from the race for sheriff and is retiring at the end of this year, when the term expires.

His challenger, sheriff’s deputy Cody Bowen, is the likely successor. Bowen said he is looking forward to implementing changes in the sheriff’s office and making a clean cut from the chain of management under Rasmussen.

“We have a great department, great deputies, and I am excited to be fully transparent with the community,” Bowen said. “Current management has already given me the green light to work with the outlying cities. They have been a great help.”

Bowen said he has not spoken to or seen Rasmussen since the sheriff announced his plan to retire.

The Observer reached out to Rasmussen for comment, but he did not respond.

CHECKS

Continued from Page 1A

out,” she said. “That would make a huge difference.”

In order to be eligible for the \$500, residents have to be 18 or older, provide documents that prove they live in Oregon and attest to financial hardship due to the March “Stay Home, Save Lives” order, earn less than \$4,000/month pre-tax before shutdowns, and have missed owed unemployment payments, according to the OCB article.

Kavanaugh said the bank was able to facilitate

quick turnarounds for the funds once people were approved.

“Our goal was to facilitate a five-minute interaction. Some went a little bit over,” he said. “For the most part we hit 5-7 minutes per person.”

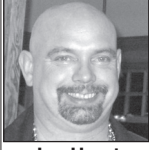
The applications were filled out in the bank and uploaded to a state website that then processed and approved the claims. Kavanaugh said he wasn’t aware Thursday of any individuals who had their claims denied, and that many were brought to tears by the help they received.

“I saw people and heard their stories. There were

people literally in tears thanking us because they could now pay their rent,” he said. “It was incredibly moving. There were many times staff wanted to hug the folks, and with COVID you couldn’t do that.”

An OCB report Friday afternoon said all 70,000 payments had been distributed.

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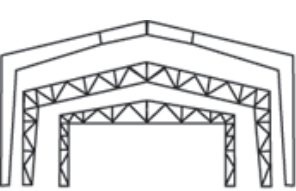
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