

# COOLING

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The sheriff's offices in Union and Wallowa counties reported little change in crime trends or calls to the station due to heat-related issues.

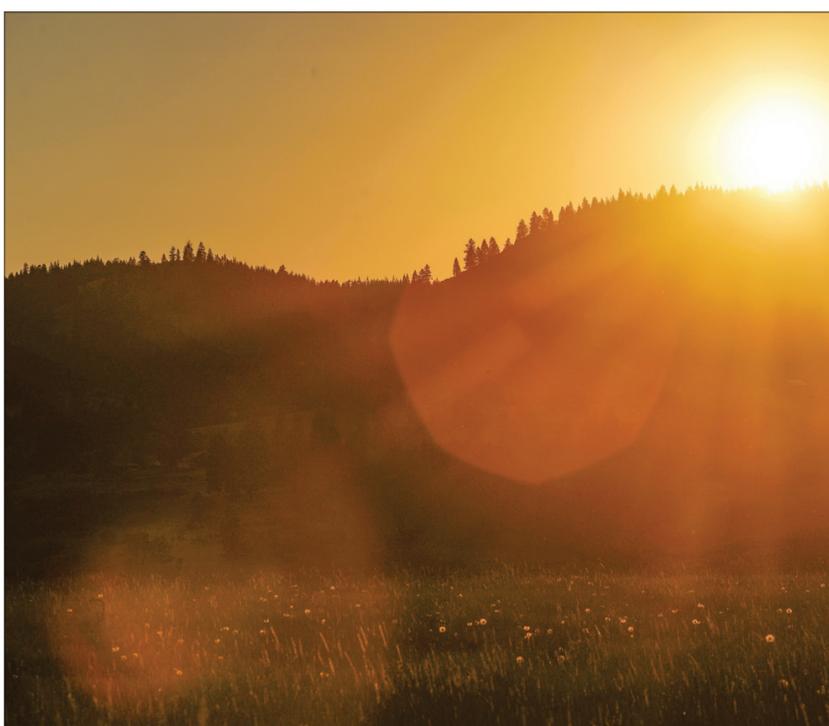
Union County deputies are patrolling the area with cases of water in case of residents in need, as well as advising welfare checks when necessary.

For calls relating to animal welfare, the Union County Sheriff's Office typically prepares accordingly in the summer months. If there happens to be a rise in animals locked in cars or areas with extreme temperatures, the current precautions are set in place by the department to address those issues preemptively, according to Union County Sheriff Cody Bowen.

Bowen said his office has not had to ramp up any of these efforts compared to past summers, despite the record temperatures.

With the record-breaking heat lingering for the rest of the week, residents have mostly stayed indoors in front of air conditioners.

However, not everyone is so lucky. A 2017 study



The sun sets over Elgin after temperatures in the town reached 113 degrees on Tuesday, June 29, 2021. Union County, along with much of the Pacific Northwest, is caught in a heat wave that has residents struggling to keep cool.

Alex Wittwer/The Observer

by the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance found that only 59% of single-family Oregon homes have air-conditioning.

"We don't have any AC at home, so we've been coming to the park and lakes and stuff like that to stay cool," John Brooks, of La Grande, said.

Cook Memorial Library, open Monday

through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., is also offering its building for anyone needing a break from the heat.

"We have AC all summer. We have places to sit and read and plenty of water bottles to give out," Carrie Bushman, the library's director of children's services, said. "We also opened up our com-

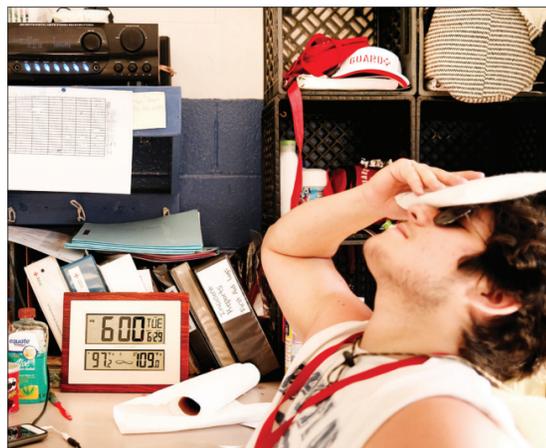
munity room with more seats to increase our total capacity."

Other organizations in La Grande offering water include the First Presbyterian Church, Community Connection, and city department buildings, including the parks and recreation department, fire department, police department and city hall.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

The La Grande Fire Department offers free water outside its building on Sunday, June 27, 2021. Union County is experiencing record-breaking temperatures although it has been less than two weeks since the official start of summer.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Caleb Saldana, a lifeguard at Elgin Community Center Pool, cools off with an ice pack while the thermometer on the counter reads 109 degrees on Tuesday, June 29, 2021. Union County has experienced multiple record-breaking days during the heat wave, leaving residents scrambling to find ways to cool off.

# Josephy Center buys its Main Street building with grant, donations

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JOSEPH — The Josephy Center for Arts and Culture in Joseph became the official owners to the building it has been leasing at 403 N. Main St. on Wednesday, June 23.

In a press release to supporters, Development Director Kellee Sheehy said, "As a donor and supporter, you've built this home for arts and culture one exhibit, one class and one event at a time. Every minute you've spent contemplating a work of art, every person you've invited through the doors, every canvas you've colored, every piece of clay you molded, every idea you've discussed within these walls, and every penny you've so generously given has built this organization just as if you had laid the logs yourself. You should be so proud. We are."

Because of the tremendous community support the center has received, the Ford Family Foundation decided to grant the Josephy Center \$230,000 to help with much-needed accessibility renovations. This money will cover the cost of an elevator, wheelchair ramps, Americans with Disabilities Act bathrooms, a

special sound system for those who have a hard time hearing and more.

Also, the center was recently informed it will be receiving \$600,000 from state lottery funds for the expansion and renovation of the building.

The recent capital campaign was one of 11 art-related capital projects in Oregon chosen to be endorsed by the Cultural Advocacy Coalition. Just a week after completing Phase I of the campaign for the purchase and repair of the building, the center is already nearly halfway to its Phase II goal for the expansion of its classrooms and workspaces.

But, Sheehy said in the release, while it might temporarily feel like the center is "rolling in the dough," anyone who's been involved in a do-it-yourself project lately is aware of the cost of lumber and other building materials and knows that this money will only stretch so far.

"Luckily, because the Josephy Center is now a permanent part of the county, we're in it for the long haul and can keep growing slowly and steadily with our amazing community," Sheehy said.

# BAN

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the band this year, consider making a donation to LHS Band."

Other local cities, like Imbler, are yet to make similar bans and will wait until the Union County Fire Defense Board determines otherwise.

"We get a heat increase every year, this year just happens to be around the Fourth of July," Imbler Fire Chief Mike Barry said. "We'll enforce it based on the fire defense board."

According to Barry, the three biggest factors in an emergency ordinance come down to local resources, state forestry regulations and the Haines Index. The index pinpoints the potential for explosive fire growth and determines how the Imbler Fire Department operates. Barry noted Imbler is currently at a three on the Haines Index, with five to six being extreme risk.

La Grande City Manager Robert Strope noted that a sizable portion of the community was pushing



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

A display of fireworks awaits customers at Walmart in Island City on Tuesday, June 29, 2021. Due to concerns about the heat and dry weather, the city of La Grande Fire Department has banned fireworks until further notice, just days before Independence Day celebrations.

for the ban and that the city received positive feedback. According to Strope, the conjunction between the recent record heat and the Independence Day holiday is what led to the firework ban, which the city has never implemented in years past.

Strope also noted that the city of La Grande's decision aligns with statewide precautions during

the heat wave. Cities such as Portland, Bend, Hood River and many across the state have also banned the use of fireworks.

"We're hoping people recognize that the fire hazard is significant and make the right decision for the safety of the community," Strope said.

The La Grande Fire Department will enforce the ban until it deems the

weather and moisture conditions have returned to normal. The fire department will work with the police department in enforcing the ban, with citations and warnings currently set as the most serious penalties.

With temperatures predicted to remain at extreme highs, there is no current timetable for how long the ban will stay in place.

# FOURTH

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the past firework shows in Union. The total cost of putting on the show will be \$14,000, which includes \$2,000 spent for advertising.

Agencies that will have staff at the fireworks show to promote safety, direct traffic and perform

other tasks include Union County Search and Rescue, the Union County Sheriff's Office and the Union Fire Department, which will have five engines at Buffalo Peak, Beverage said.

Union County's fireworks display was conducted for at least four decades in La Grande at Eastern Oregon University where many watched

from Community Stadium. The show was moved to Union after 2017 because of construction work on Community Stadium's field. The show has remained in Union since then because Eastern no longer has room to conduct the fireworks show due to ongoing construction projects such as the fieldhouse on the university's former

baseball field.

In addition to Union, places Northeast Oregon residents can go to see a major fireworks include Wallowa Lake for the annual "Shake the Lake" display. The event, which usually is put on from a raft floating in the north end of Wallowa Lake, is scheduled to begin at 10 p.m.

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