

TODAY

Today is Friday, Aug. 27, the 239th day of 2021. There are 126 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY

On August 27, 1776, the Battle of Long Island began during the Revolutionary War as British troops attacked American forces who ended up being forced to retreat two days later.

On this date

In 1859, Edwin L. Drake drilled the first successful oil well in the United States, at Titusville, Pa.

In 1883, the island volcano Krakatoa erupted; the resulting tidal waves in Indonesia's Sunda Strait claimed some 36,000 lives in Java and Sumatra.

In 1949, a violent white mob prevented an outdoor concert headlined by Paul Robeson from taking place near Peekskill, New York. (The concert was held eight days later.)

In 1964, President Lyndon Baines Johnson accepted his party's nomination for a term in his own right, telling the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, "Let us join together in giving every American the fullest life which he can hope for."

In 1967, Brian Epstein, manager of the Beatles, was found dead in his London flat from an accidental overdose of sleeping pills; he was 32.

In 1979, British war hero Lord Louis Mountbatten and three other people were killed off the coast of Ireland in a boat explosion claimed by the Irish Republican Army.

In 1998, two suspects in the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Kenya were brought to the United States to face charges. (Mohamed Rashed Daoud al-'Owhali and Mohammed Sadiq Odeh were convicted in 2001 of conspiring to carry out the bombing; both were sentenced to life in prison.)

In 2001, Israeli helicopters fired a pair of rockets through office windows and killed senior PLO leader Mustafa Zibri.

In 2005, people jammed freeways and gas stations as they rushed to get out of the way of Hurricane Katrina, which was headed toward New Orleans.

In 2006, a Comair CRJ-100 crashed after trying to take off from the wrong runway in Lexington, Ky., killing 49 people.

In 2008, Barack Obama was nominated for president by the Democratic National Convention in Denver.

In 2009, mourners filed past the closed casket of the late Sen. Edward Kennedy at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston. Jaycee Lee Dugard, kidnapped when she was 11, was reunited with her mother 18 years after her abduction in California.

Ten years ago: Hurricane Irene, after striking Puerto Rico and the Bahamas, pushed up the U.S. east coast, prompting evacuations in New York City and leaving major flood damage in Vermont.

Five years ago: Republican Donald Trump warned of a "war on the American farmer," telling a crowd that rival Hillary Clinton wanted "to shut down family farms" and implement anti-agriculture policies; Trump's speech came hours after Clinton received her first national security briefing as the Democratic presidential nominee.

One year ago: Hurricane Laura roared ashore near Cameron, Louisiana, bringing 150 mile-an-hour winds, torrential rains and a storm surge as high as 15 feet; the storm, one of the strongest to strike the U.S., would leave more than 20 people dead in Louisiana and Texas.

CORRECTION

In the Page B1 story "High hopes," published on Thursday, Aug. 25, the photo outline misspelled the name of David Williamson.

LOTTERY

Wednesday, Aug. 25, 2021

Megabucks

3-9-33-34-35-47

Jackpot: \$2.3 million

Lucky Lines

4-8-12-13-18-22-28-30

Estimated jackpot: \$69,000

Powerball

27-39-54-56-59

Powerball: 24

Power Play: 3

Jackpot: \$322 million

Win for Life

5-17-19-34

Pick 4

1 p.m.: 6-5-5-6

4 p.m.: 0-8-6-9

7 p.m.: 3-6-6-6

10 p.m.: 2-0-4-2

Thursday, Aug. 26, 2021

Lucky Lines

1-6-12-15-20-22-25-30

Jackpot: \$70,000

Pick 4

1 p.m.: 7-2-5-7

4 p.m.: 0-1-4-9

7 p.m.: 0-1-6-2

10 p.m.: 3-5-9-5

Nobody hurt in Thursday house fire

Blaze destroys front porch of Union home

By DICK MASON

The Observer

UNION — There were no reported injuries Thursday, Aug. 26, during a structure fire in Union that destroyed the front porch of a two-story home.

"We were very lucky. It could have been much worse," said assistant Union Fire Chief Frank Maestas. "Any time someone does not get hurt it is a good thing. You can repair damage, but you cannot repair lives."

The homeowner's girlfriend was in the home, on the 300 block of South College Street, when the fire was reported just after 7 a.m., but was able to escape. The interior of the house sustained minor damage from the blaze and there also was smoke damage, according to La Grande Rural Chief Craig Kretschmer.

The cause of the blaze is under investigation.

The owner of the home, Bob Copeland, wasn't there when the fire was reported. He was in La Grande at work when he learned of the fire and



Dick Mason/The Observer

La Grande and Union fire departments respond to a residential fire at 333 S. College St. in Union on Thursday, Aug. 26, 2021. It was the second house fire in two days in Union.

rushed back to Union. He said he was relieved to see that nobody was injured and that his home was intact.

"I thought it would be a lot worse," Copeland said.

A dog and four cats were in the house when the fire started. The dog and two of the cats escaped. The two other cats were found after the fire under a bed in the home alive and well, Copeland said.

The home's owner said on Friday, Aug. 27, that many people have come

forward to provide support since the fire.

"We have gotten a lot of help from the community," Copeland said.

In addition to the Union and La Grande rural fire departments, the La Grande Fire Department also responded to the blaze.

People who want to make donations to assist the victims of the Wednesday fire may call 541-605-9072.

This was the second house fire in Union in two days. A fire on Tuesday,

Aug. 24, damaged an outdoor patio area and significantly damaged a garage wall of a home on the 900 block of North First Street. The homeowner, who opened the door to see flames spewing out from an outdoor barbecue cabana, also reported a propane tank exploding, sending the tank across the yard and setting fires in a field adjacent to the house.

No one was injured in Tuesday's fire. The cause of the blaze is under investigation.

Pendleton man crashes motorcycle into traffic backed up from semi wreck that closed I-84

By PHIL WRIGHT

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — A Pendleton man suffered serious injuries Wednesday, Aug. 25, on the eastbound side of Interstate 84 when he crashed his motorcycle into a passenger car that was stopped because of a semitrailer crash miles ahead.

Oregon State Police reported a helicopter ambulance flew Stephen Chandler Peterson, 71, from the scene.

OSP Lt. Karl Farber of the Pendleton Area Command said traffic on I-84 began backing up after a semitrailer full of 50-gallon barrels of apple juice concentrate crashed at 7:23 a.m. on the bridge at Meacham near milepost 238.

The driver of the semi, a 28-year-old man from Tacoma, Washington, fell asleep, and the big rig hit an impact barrier in the road construction zone.



Oregon Department of Transportation/Contributed Photo

A semi lays on its side after a crash on Interstate 84 Wednesday, Aug. 25, 2021. Oregon State Police said traffic on I-84 began backing up after a semitrailer full of 50-gallon barrels of apple juice concentrate crashed on the bridge at Meacham near milepost 238.

The driver overcorrected, Farber said, and the tractor trailer spun, flipped and got hung up on the bridge, stopping short of going off.

But the real problem was the mass of apple juice concentrate.

Farber said the substance covered the surface of the bridge, making it slippery and sticky and a priority to clean up before

traffic could again pass through safely. He said the concentrate was the main reason the closure lasted as long as it did.

ODOT reported the freeway was open again at 5:08 p.m.

"We knew we were going to be shut down a long time, so we closed at the 216 for access to services at Arrowhead (Truck

Plaza)," he said. "We had a lot of traffic backing up on the freeway."

The traffic backed up to about milepost 213, about 3 miles east of Pendleton, where at 11:43 a.m., Peterson and the Harley Davidson motorcycle he was operating crashed into a Toyota Avalon.

The impact threw Peterson from the motorcycle, according to a report from state police, which then collided with a semitrailer on the shoulder of the freeway.

Farber said Peterson was not able to recount what happened at the scene. Medics from the Umatilla Tribal Fire Department responded and stabilized him. State police shut down westbound traffic near the crash so a Life Flight helicopter could land and fly him to a hospital.

Farber said OSP did not know the destination, nor Peterson's condition, but was following up on that.

NEWS BRIEFS

Pursuit in La Grande ends in arrest

LA GRANDE — The La Grande Police Department arrested Brian David Smith, 34, after a pursuit near Riverside Park on Thursday, Aug. 26.

Smith was arrested for driving with a suspended license, reckless driving and attempting to elude a police officer. The pursuit began shortly after 9:30 a.m. on Albany Street in La Grande. When officers attempted a traffic stop, Smith sped away on Cove Avenue, driving through several stop signs as he headed toward Island City.

The pursuit ended when Smith parked his car at his residence on Robin Road near Fruitdale Lane. Smith was taken into custody after complying with officers on scene.

The Union County Sheriff's Office and the Oregon State Police aided the La Grande Police Department during the pursuit and arrest.

La Grande resident reports malicious phone scam

LA GRANDE — A phone scam involving stolen personal information from a fake Verizon official occurred in La Grande this past week.

Charles McDaniel, of La Grande, said he got an email that appeared to be from Verizon, but the address was spelled one letter differently.

The scam resulted in McDaniel's account being hacked and used to buy a phone plan that was shipped

to his residence. The scam account mailed a return label and urged him to ship the phone to a Florida location.

After contacting the Oregon Department of Justice, the Florida number and email account were confirmed as a scam. McDaniel said he knew of others in the area who were contacted by the same email address and phone number.

According to a spokesperson at the Verizon store in La Grande, this is not a scam that is a common occurrence. The employee encouraged anyone affected by the scam to reach out to the company's fraud department in order to make a claim.

Consumer complaints can be filed to the Oregon Department of Justice at <https://justice.oregon.gov/consumercomplaints>.

Union County tallies 28 new COVID-19 cases in two days

LA GRANDE — The Oregon Health Authority announced 13 new COVID-19 cases in Union County in its report from Thursday, Aug. 26, and 15 new cases Friday, Aug. 27. Walla Walla County recorded eight new cases both days.

Statewide, 2,057 new confirmed and presumptive cases were reported alongside nine new deaths from COVID-19. A one-day record of 3,207 cases were reported Friday, along with 20 new deaths.

Union County's case count stands

at 529 for this month and 2,251 throughout the entire pandemic. Walla Walla County's total through August has reached 134, which contributes to a total of 373 cases since the pandemic began.

The amount of patients hospitalized for COVID-19 in Oregon increased, with 1,098 patients currently in hospitals due to the virus. There are 308 COVID-19 patients in ICU beds. ICU bed availability currently stands at 40 beds available out of 663 in the state. For non-ICU beds, there are 305 available out of 4,279 total.

City council eyes emergency status in COVID-19 spike

LA GRANDE — The La Grande City Council meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 1, to consider declaring a state of emergency due to the spike in COVID-19 cases.

The virtual meeting will be live streamed by EO Alive TV on its website and the city's Facebook page.

City council members will take the recent statewide mandates into consideration prior to voting on a state of emergency. If approved, the state of emergency would begin on Sept. 1, and last 60 days or until terminated by the city council. Under a state of emergency, the city can adopt procedures, measures and necessary actions in order to protect the health and safety of residents, property and infrastructure in La Grande.

— The Observer

La Grande schools to start year with fewer staff

COVID-19 leaves district shorthanded when school starts next week

By DICK MASON

The Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande School District will likely start the 2021-2022 school year with as many as six faculty and staff members absent due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

George Mendoza, superintendent of the La Grande School District, told the

school board at a work session Wednesday, Aug. 25, that the affected faculty and staff members will not be

able to work when school opens next week because they are either recovering from COVID-19 or have to be quarantined because of a possible recent exposure to the virus.

School begins Monday, Aug. 30, for kindergarten through seventh grade and for freshmen, and on Aug. 31 for students in eighth grade and for sophomores, juniors and seniors.

Safety mandates

Mendoza also told the school board the recent COVID-19 safety mandates required by the state have been made for one primary reason — the state wants to do everything possible to help school districts avoid again having to offer only online instruction.

School districts were limited to distance learning in spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in 2020-2021 many schools offered instruction only via online Comprehensive Distance Learning classes for most of the year. CDL was not popular among many students and educators across the state.

Mendoza also discussed Gov. Kate Brown's COVID-19 vaccine mandate that requires all teachers and staff to be vaccinated by Oct. 18.

Mendoza noted that two groups of people can be exempted, those who have sincere religious beliefs that prevent them from receiving a COVID-19 vaccination and individuals who have a physical impairment that limits their ability to receive a COVID-19 vaccination based on a specified medical diagnosis.

Estimated enrollment

The La Grande School District's estimated enrollment, as of Aug. 25, is 2,232 students, 15 fewer than it had in mid-September 2020.

The district's estimated total of elementary school students is 980, with 411 at Central Elementary, 267 at Greenwood Elementary, 258 at Island City Elementary, 10 students in the Rising Stars program, and 34 in the La Grande Virtual Learning Academy, which is the district's online education program.

Estimated middle school level enrollment is 543. La Grande Middle School, has an estimated 157 sixth graders, 180 seventh graders and 169 eighth graders on campus, plus five in its Explore program and 32 LVLA students.

The district estimates 709 high school students — 657 at La Grande High School and 52 at the La Grande Virtual Learning Academy. Estimates show 187 freshmen, 153 sophomores, 178 juniors and 139 seniors on campus.