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## No plans to cancel activities

Local school districts disregarding state guidance on limiting extracurriculars

By **DICK MASON**  
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — A state guidance calling for extracurricular activities in Oregon schools to be canceled to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 omicron variant will likely have a limited impact on school districts in Union County.

Oregon's education and health leaders said on Monday, Jan. 3, if schools continue to host extracurricular activities, "they should expect rapid transmission of COVID-19" that could prevent students from being able to attend class in person due to isolation and quarantine periods.

"We accept it as a recommendation. It is telling us to pause, review and strengthen our risk mitigation safety protocol," said George Mendoza, superintendent of the La Grande School District.

Mendoza said the guidance will not prompt his school district to scale back its extracurricular activities. However, he said the La Grande School District will place an increased focus on safety protocol, including increasing the number of hand sanitation stations and more strictly enforcing the state's mask rule, which requires everyone inside a school building to wear a mask.

Mendoza does not foresee a need for the school district to cut back on sports and club activities because the system the school has now is working so well that La Grande is in the low-risk category due to minimal COVID-19 infections.

"This is an indication that we should keep following our key practices for preventing the spread of COVID-19," he said. "We have a successful operation."

Mendoza said it is

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# DISPATCHES FROM FLYING J TRUCK STOP

Closure of I-84 on Jan. 5 leaves truckers stranded in the Grande Ronde Valley



Trucker Ken Spriggs makes his way toward the Flying J Travel Center, La Grande, after winter weather forced the shutdown Wednesday, Jan. 5, 2022, of Interstate 84. Now 78, he said he's considering making this his last season of driving.

Photos by Alex Wittwer/The Observer

By **ALEX WITTWER**  
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — Brenda Holman belongs to a dying generation of truckers.

Her jacket is embroidered with "Aunt B." She jokes that she is an aunt to seven, mother to none. A byproduct of the lifestyle, she said. She noted it was difficult to find a

partner. She's been a truck driver for more than 32 years.

Inside her truck, a collection of books. A physical map of interstates. A small bed, slightly disheveled. A CB radio hangs above the driver's seat. A smattering of notebooks and pens placed neatly on the dashboard. A small monitor attached to the dash for checking the routes, though she usually uses her phone to find information

on road closures.

Her CB radio has become more silent over the years, with less chatter coming over the airwaves. She remembered when truck stops were abuzz with truckers swapping stories and jokes over coffee whenever the roads were closed.

On Wednesday, Jan. 5, she found herself

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LEFT: Brenda Holman, a truck driver with Fremont Contract Carriers Inc., checks TripCheck for road closure notifications at the Flying J Travel Center in La Grande. RIGHT: Truck driver Ken Spriggs of Vale looks over his coffee inside the Flying J Travel Center. They were among the dozens of truckers stranded there Wednesday, Jan. 5, 2022, when Interstate 84 was closed due to winter weather.

## State lawmaker seeks to limit governor's emergency powers

Oregon has been under a state of emergency since Brown declared one March 8, 2020

By **STEVEN MITCHELL**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

CRANE — A state lawmaker from Eastern Oregon will look to trim the powers of state government during an emergency when the Legislature meets for a short

session next month.

A bill written by Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, would amend Oregon's Constitution to spell out when governors can declare emergencies, what powers they can exercise and, more important, how long they can unilaterally keep

them in place.

Oregon has been under a state of emergency since March 8, 2020, when Gov. Kate Brown declared her intention to take extraordinary measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Brown has extended the state of emergency several times

since then.

Under Owens' proposal, known as Legislative Concept No. 49 until it is assigned a bill number, the governor, when making a declaration of emergency, must specify each county where the emergency exists and list reasons why local

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### WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section	
Tonight	Wednesday
31 LOW	39/28
Cloudy	Mostly cloudy

### CONTACT US

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THURSDAY

SHORT SESSION TO TAKE ON AG ISSUES

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