

Pendleton responds to reporting on drone crashes

Bloomberg reports Amazon drones crashed five times in four-month period in 2021

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Pendleton city officials are pushing back against a Bloomberg News article that reported several drone crashes at the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range.

According to an article published Sunday, April 10, Bloomberg reviewed internal documents, read government reports and spoke with 13 current and former employees associated with Amazon Prime Air, a drone package delivery project that has conducted tests in Pendleton, among several other sites across the country. The news agency's reporting revealed safety concerns and crashes hampered Amazon's testing program.

"While experimental aircraft are



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File
A logo for the Pendleton UAS Range adorns a trailer in the World War II-era hangar at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport during an event on Wednesday, May 19, 2021, announcing BMCC's UAS program and new additions to the range's facilities.

expected to crash during test flights, current and former employees say pressure to get the program back on track has prompted some managers to take unnecessary risks that have put personnel in harm's way," reporters Spencer Soper and Matt Day wrote.

Bloomberg reported Amazon drones crashed five times during a four-month period in 2021 and obtained a 911 record detailing a fire

in a wheat field that a drone crash set off near the Pendleton airport.

An Amazon spokesperson told Bloomberg that Pendleton city officials hadn't previously made public comments about the crashes. But during an interview Wednesday, April 13, with the East Oregonian, City Manager Robb Corbett and Economic Development Director Steve Chrisman, who oversees the airport and UAS operations, talked

about the Bloomberg article and how transparent they should be about drone crashes.

Chrisman touted the growth of the test range from an entity that saw few operations in its early years to a busy hub for drone activity that frequently attracts the world's top tech and aviation companies. Chrisman didn't mention Amazon or other companies by name, citing nondisclosure agreements the city signed, but he said "a very small number of mishaps" paled in comparison to the thousands of operations the range has hosted.

"Those were disgruntled employees that had an ax to grind," he said, referring to the sources in the Bloomberg article. "As far as reporting, I don't know that we've ever called (the East Oregonian) when a Cessna wheel fell off or when a crosswind blew over a plane. If you call us we certainly respond. But we're not the National Transportation Safety Board."

Chrisman and Corbett said the

test range was committed to safety but would not go out of its way to advertise crashes, especially because they were happening in sparsely populated areas and did not hurt anyone. Corbett said some of these incidents were like when "an ambulance backs into a car in a parking lot," a situation that might generate a 911 call but not a public record.

Range Manager Darryl Abing said the UAS range makes a record of every test operation and sends the data to officials at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, the institution that oversees Oregon's test range system, who then forward it to the Federal Aviation Administration. A crash might trigger an extra layer of reporting to the FAA or NTSB depending on the severity of the incident, but not every malfunction or emergency landing needed to be cataloged.

Abing also said he didn't know where Bloomberg sourced its information, but its reporting didn't align with the range's internal data.



Chrisman



Corbett

Planned Parenthood moving into Ontario on the Idaho border

Nonprofit has not yet confirmed plans with leasing space

By AMELIA TEMPLETON
Oregon Public Broadcasting

ONTARIO — Planned Parenthood is renting medical office space in the town of Ontario, on the Oregon-Idaho border.

It's the latest strategic move by pro-abortion rights groups in Oregon. Earlier this year, in a quiet campaign, they successfully lobbied the Legislature to set aside \$15 million in an unrestricted fund for reproductive health equity.

Planned Parenthood has not confirmed its plans for the space, but it has said it is preparing for an influx of out-of-state patients seeking abortions in Oregon in light

of multiple legal challenges to abortion rights.

"No matter what happens we will be there for our in-state and out-of-state neighbors, and continue to meet the needs of our patients," said Kenji Nozaki, the chief of affiliate operations at Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette.

"We are prepared to support anyone who seeks their legal right to decide whether and when to become pregnant."

A clinic in Ontario could be a significant high desert outpost for access to abortion and other reproductive health care services, in advance of a U.S. Supreme

Court decision anticipated this summer that many believe will overturn Roe v. Wade, the nearly 50-year-old landmark abortion ruling.

The small Oregon town is an hour's drive from Boise, Idaho — one of the fastest-growing metro areas in the country.

Idaho has two trigger laws criminalizing abortion at all stages of pregnancy that would take effect in the event of a successful legal challenge to Roe v. Wade.

More recently, Idaho

passed a law, modeled after legislation in Texas, that would ban all abortions after about six weeks of pregnancy by allowing family members to sue abortion providers.

The Idaho law was set to take effect on Friday, April 22, but the Idaho Supreme Court issued a stay while it hears a legal challenge filed by the Planned Parenthood affiliate in Idaho.

Oregon has no legal restrictions on abortion, but the state has just one clinic that performs

abortions east of the Cascade Mountains, in Bend. For those seeking abortions in eastern and north-

eastern parts of the state, the closest clinics are out of state, in Boise or Walla Walla, Washington.

"We are prepared to support anyone who seeks their legal right to decide whether and when to become pregnant."

— Kenji Nozaki, with Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette

Baker City Police chief proposes limits on camping

Ordinance is designed to curtail homeless camping

By SAMANTHA O'CONNOR
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Police Chief Ty Duby is asking the city council to approve an ordinance limiting where and when people can camp in parks and other public property.

Duby, who presented Ordinance 3383 to councilors during a recent meeting, said the document is intended to address problems with homeless people camping on public property.

The ordinance states, in part: "It shall be unlawful for any person to set up tents or any other temporary shelter or to use house trailers, campers or automobiles for the purpose of overnight camping in any city park, nor shall any person remain in any city park after closing hours; provided, however, organized youth groups under competent adult supervision may be permitted overnight camping privileges."

The ordinance defines parks as including the Leo Adler Memorial Parkway. The ordinance also prohibits camping in several other specific public properties, including within 150 of any school, preschool or child care center, or at the Baker Heritage Museum at 2480 Grove St., the Baker County Courthouse, Sam-O Swim Center, the YMCA

gym on Church Street and the YMCA Fitness Center on Pocahontas Road.

The ordinance also states that if someone is living in a vehicle, it must be moved at least every 24 hours and for at least the distance of a city block.

"Really what we're doing, we're looking for solutions to work with homeless issues that regularly arise in our community," Duby told councilors.

The police chief said last summer that he intended to bring an ordinance to councilors to consider.

He was prompted by a bill that the Oregon Legislature passed earlier in 2021 and that Gov. Kate Brown signed into law on June 23.

The law — introduced as House Bill 3115 and passed by the Democratic majorities in both the state House and Senate — is based on a 2019 federal court ruling in a Boise case that in effect prohibited cities and counties from making it illegal for people to sleep outdoors in public spaces if the jurisdiction doesn't provide indoor alternatives.

Baker County's two state legislators, Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, and Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, both voted against the bill.

The new Oregon law states that cities or counties that have ordinances regulating "the acts of sitting, lying, sleeping or keeping warm and dry outdoors on public property that is open

to the public must be objectively reasonable as to time, place and manner with regards to persons experiencing homelessness."

Baker City does not have such an ordinance now, but Duby said ordinance 3383 would serve that purpose.

According to state law, "A person experiencing homelessness may bring suit for injunctive or declaratory relief to challenge the objective reasonableness of a city or county law."

The law states that "reasonableness shall be determined based on the totality of the circumstances, including, but not limited to, the impact of the law on persons experiencing homelessness."

Duby said that once House Bill 3115 passed, he looked at what other cities had done, finding that Coos Bay and North Bend had come up with an ordinance similar to Baker City's proposed ordinance 3383.

"We feel like House Bill 3115, while offering compassion and support to those experiencing homelessness, can fail sometimes to protect both the citizens of our community and the very homelessness the law is designed to protect," Duby told councilors at the meeting.

Duby said the proposed Baker City ordinance would prevent camping on public property in residential zones, while it would be



Duby



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Union County will begin their roadside spraying program to control vegetation and noxious weeds that are encroaching on county road shoulders and right-of-ways. In most locations, spraying will extend four to eight feet from pavement edges. Property owners who do not want herbicides applied near their property must sign an "Owner Will Maintain" agreement with the county which must be updated annually. The county will provide signs for the owners participating. Property owners wishing to participate can sign up for the "Owner Will Maintain" program at the Union County Public Works Department located at 10513 N. McAlister Road in Island City. Any questions, please call Brian Clapp 541-805-5399 or email bclapp@union-county.org.

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