



BID



George Plaven/Capital Press
A row of equipment in the auction yard at J. Stout Auctions in Washougal, Wash. Bidders can still preview items in person three days before the virtual auction begins.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, AUCTION

More equipment auctions going online



Kasey Steendam

By GEORGE PLAVEN
Capital Press

WASHOUGAL, Wash. — Like many businesses impacted by COVID-19, last year marked a crossroads for J. Stout Auctions.

The company, which specializes in selling heavy equipment for construction and agriculture, could no longer have in-person crowds at its auctions due to pandemic restrictions. Quarterly auctions hosted by JSA in Spokane and Washougal, Wash., would routinely draw up to 1,000 bidders from across the Northwest.

That's when JSA and owner Jake Stout began a digital transformation, pivoting exclusively to online sales for

public health and safety.

"It was nerve-racking for everyone," said Kasey Steendam, the company's marketing manager. "We weren't sure how it was going to be done."

JSA held its first online-only auction on April 29, 2020, using live-streaming webcams to broadcast over the internet. Though it wasn't perfect — the video was too dark, and the sound quality was less than ideal — Steendam said they were pleasantly surprised to see no decline in the number of registered bidders or item values.

By November, with a return to pre-pandemic life still uncertain, JSA made the

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George Plaven/Capital Press
The studio at J. Stout Auctions was designed to look like a television newsroom.

Emergency worker protections put Oregon farms to the test

By GEORGE PLAVEN
Capital Press

SALEM — Farmworker advocates are so far pleased with emergency rules adopted by Oregon OSHA to protect workers from extreme heat and wildfire smoke, though they say more education is needed to make sure everyone is aware of the new mandates.

On July 8, the state's workplace health and safety agency announced a rule requiring employers to provide sufficient shade and drinking water when the heat index exceeds 80 degrees Fahrenheit, and regular rest periods when the heat index exceeds 90 degrees.

The rule came on the heels of a "heat dome" that enveloped the Pacific

Northwest in late June, with temperatures above 100 degrees. One farmworker, 38-year-old Sebastian Francisco Perez, died of an apparent heat stroke in 104-degree weather June 26 at Ernst Nursery and Farms in St. Paul, Ore.

Oregon OSHA wasn't done there, adopting two more rules on Aug. 2 establishing safeguards for workers in heavy smoke and high heat in employer-provided housing.

The smoke rule requires farms and businesses to provide outdoor workers with N95 masks when the Air Quality Index, or AQI, exceeds 201. AQI is a measure of air particle pollution using a scale from 0 to 500 — anything below 50 represents good air qual-



Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press File
The new emergency rules adopted by Oregon OSHA are intended to protect workers.

ity, and anything above 300 represents hazardous air quality.

As for worker housing, farms must provide cooling areas for workers if they cannot maintain an indoor temperature of 78 degrees

or less. All rules are temporary and will remain in place for 180 days. An advisory committee is now working with Oregon OSHA to adopt permanent heat and smoke protections.

Reyna Lopez, executive director of the farmworkers union Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste, or PCUN, said the rules are having a positive impact.

During the week of Aug. 9, which brought another multi-day, triple-digit heat wave, she said they did not hear of any more heat-related fatalities or injuries.

"The tone was just a lot more positive than it was that week of the heat dome," Lopez said.

PCUN recently conducted surveys with 50 farmworkers in the Willamette Valley to assess how well they felt employers were complying with the rules. The vast majority, Lopez said, indicated they were being provided with enough water and shade

during the extreme heat. "Overall, people feel like there are steps being taken to follow the rules," she said.

Since July 9, Oregon OSHA has fielded 971 workplace complaints from across the state, according to the agency's records. Of those, 136 were marked as "heat-related."

A Capital Press review found that, of the 136 heat-related complaints, 18 complaints were made against 12 different farms and food processing companies. Complaints ranged from not providing access to water or breaks, to workers not being trained to recognize the signs of heat-related illnesses.

Each of those complaints

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Biden EPA to ban pesticide chlorpyrifos

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

The Environmental Protection Agency informed a federal court Aug. 18 that it will ban the pesticide chlorpyrifos, a crop-protection chemical widely used in agriculture for more than 50 years.

The EPA said it could not determine that aggregate exposure to chlorpyrifos

meets the safety standards of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. "Accordingly, EPA is revoking all tolerances for chlorpyrifos," the EPA stated in a rule expected to be published Aug. 19 in the Federal Register.

The ban will become effective in six months.

The decision grants a petition filed in 2007 by two anti-pesticide groups that

sought to ban chlorpyrifos. The Obama EPA tentatively proposed a ban, but resisted court pressure to finalize it, leaving the decision the Trump administration.

The Trump EPA denied the petition, but said it would continue to study whether chlorpyrifos meets safety standards.

The 9th U.S. Circuit of Appeals has consistently sided with ban advocates

and pushed the Obama and Trump administrations to rule on the petition.

Ban advocates said chlorpyrifos causes brain damage in infants and unborn children. The EPA, under both Obama and Trump, questioned the evidence for that claim.

Household use of chlorpyrifos, unless in child-proof packaging, was banned two decades ago.

Farm groups and the Obama USDA defended chlorpyrifos' use in commercial agriculture as safe and effective.

American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall on Wednesday criticized the Biden EPA for departing from how pesticides are reviewed and registered.

"This administration has

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