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LOCAL: Sumpter welcomes new Mayor. PAGE 5



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Haines man dies in fire

BY TODD ARRIOLA
Todd@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Long-time Haines resident Thomas L. Christensen, 83, died in a fire at his home at 811 Robert Street early Sunday morning. The exact cause of the fire is undetermined, said several fire officials, including Haines Fire Department Chief Jerry Hampton and State Deputy Fire Marshal Casey Kump.

According to a press release issued by Baker County Sheriff Ash on Sunday, Baker County Consolidated Dispatch had received a report of a

house fire at the aforementioned address, at around 1:20 a.m. that morning, and the Haines Fire Department, the Baker Rural Fire Protection District, the Oregon State Police, and the Baker County Sheriff's Office responded, finding the home fully engulfed.

The fire crews kept the fire from spreading to other structures in the area (it was contained to the property), according to the press release, but the home itself was completely destroyed. Christensen was later found in the home (in his bedroom), around 3 p.m.

"That thing was fully engulfed before we even got out of the fire station," Hampton said, noting how quickly the house had burned. "And, of course, that put us basically into a defensive mode, to where everything was just primarily from the outside of the structure—you know, cool things down, and put it out, the best we could."

Hampton said there was either a malfunction with the wood stove in the home, or possibly an accelerant used to start the fire helped spread it—theories based on witness accounts about Christensen's fire

starting methods, and from investigating the scene itself.

Hampton said, "From indications early on, there were a couple of witnesses who said they saw they fire, and one person in particular, as she got close, heard an explosion in the house, and at that point, the fire was immediately throughout the house (witnesses described hearing some explosions, which could have helped spread the fire, but were not cited as the cause)."

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Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

Fire took the life of a Haines man Sunday morning.

Snow, ice trigger rare Pine-Eagle School closure



Sunny Werner / The Baker County Press

The front of the Pine-Eagle High School was barely visible through the mounds of snow Wednesday.

BY SUNNY WERNER
Sunny@TheBakerCountyPress.com

For the first time in recent memory, Halfway's Pine Eagle Schools closed Wednesday and planned for closure Thursday due to snow. The notices went out to parents Wednesday morning, informing them that the busses would be loading up at 1:00 p.m. Wednesday for an early release, and that there was no school planned for Thursday.

Severe storms and unsafe bus travel conditions prompted the closure.

When asked, local Halfway residents agreed that they couldn't remember there ever having been a "snow day" before now.

"I don't know of anytime that we have ever had an entire snow day. I went to school here—Kindergarten-12th grades, moved away for a few years, and have been working here for the last seven years. When I was in the first grade, I know that we got sent home at lunchtime. That was because the power had been off all morning and was getting cold! We've had delays twice since I've worked here. I've only heard of closures due to broken pipes, power outages, the city water issues, and the fire that came over the hill," said Angie Chetwood, Pine Eagle School Secretary.

"Nobody around here can ever remember a snow day," Sydney Saunders of Halfway said.

SEE PINE EAGLE SCHOOL PAGE 7



Sunny Werner / The Baker County Press

Pine-Eagle students make a run for it in the nasty weather after being released early Wednesday.

Man arrested with stolen car claims to operate 39 newspapers

BY KERRY McQUISTEN
News@TheBakerCountyPress.com

On January 16 at 3:43 a.m., Officer Rand Weaver arrested Mitchell "Mick" Andrew May on Campbell Street on a recovery of a stolen vehicle listed with an out-of-the-area agency.

May was charged with Possession of a Stolen Vehicle and Unauthorized Use of a Motor Vehicle.

May, age 52, is a technically listed as a resident at 23 N. 68th Street West Richland, Washington, but has frequented Baker City since at least this past summer, making his presence known on Facebook.

May claims to be the owner of *The Baker City Statesman*, "Baker City's founded free and always will be positive news source! A Bullseye Communications Facebook newspaper. See Bullseye Marketing for questions and or help for your business or cause."

SEE MAN ARRESTED PAGE 5



Photo courtesy of the Baker County Sheriff's Office. Mitchell "Mick" May.

New local postmaster talks snow, mailboxes

BY GINA K. SWARTZ
Gina@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Without question Baker City has experienced a wide range of hardships with the unusual snowfall and record low temperatures—be it road closures, budget concerns with City street plowing or mail delivery.

Steve Legler, the new Baker City Postmaster, expressed deep concern for the unique situation the community is facing. Legler got the call, placing him in his new position, this week.

"I know the Postal Service's slogan is through snow, sleet, rain it doesn't matter—we deliver mail. There is a fine line between doing that and also keeping our employees safe," he said.

SEE MAIL AND SNOW PAGE 3

	Friday	A chance for snow showers. Otherwise mostly to partly cloudy. Light accumulations are possible. High near 30. Chance of precipitation is 40%. Lows in the mid-teens.
	Saturday	A chance for snow showers. Otherwise mostly cloudy. Light accumulations are possible. Highs in the lower 20s. Lows in the mid-teens.
	Sunday	A chance for snow showers. Otherwise mostly cloudy. Light to moderate accumulations are possible. Highs in the mid 20s. Chance of precipitation is 60%. Lows in the upper teens.

Your weekend weather forecast for Baker County.



Official weather provider for The Baker County Press.

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