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Gridiron coaches sought for IVHS

The Illinois Valley High School football team is seeking assistant coaches for the 2008/09 season.

Those interested in coaching can contact head coach Ray Yarbrough at footballray@gmail.com or telephone 787-0191.

Reservoir necessity questioned

**Kerby Water District,
city of CJ debate issue**

Disagreement about the need for a reservoir and if so whether it should be in the city of Cave Junction or in Kerby Water District (KWD) resulted in a somewhat heated exchange during the city council meeting Monday night, Aug. 11.

John Plute of KWD addressed the council during its meeting in city hall. He animatedly referred to an email received earlier the same day from City Recorder Jim Polk. The latter provided information from a workshop involving the city and KWD.

Polk's email noted, "The discussion started with the proposed engineering review of the HBH Engineering hydraulic analysis, the cost estimate, the information that would need to be forwarded to Pace Engineering with the scope to review the impact the extension of water service to Kerby would have on the current system and storage capacity, with Kenny Houck stating that KWD understood the city's desire for due diligence to make an informed decision.

"He added that the KWD engineers would provide any information Pace needed to complete the system modeling. "The consensus of the council was that if Pace agreed with the position taken by HBH, the city would support the plan. This led to a discussion on required storage capacity and production capabilities of the city in a major fire event.

"The issue of whether a reservoir is needed is the sticking point," the message stated, "and the city has not accepted that one is not necessary. The council, by consensus, stated that they could accept our engineer's position, whichever way it came out."

However, Plute, while noting that KWD does not have the money for a reservoir, strongly disagreed with (Continued on page 10)



The Sikorsky S-61N helicopter that crashed at the Buckhorn Fire, approximately 15 miles northwest of Junction City in Trinity County is shown (above). The photo was taken on May 2 at Danville Regional Airport in Danville, Va. (Photo courtesy of Richard T. Davis)

Burnt wreckage of the ill-fated Carson chopper is shown at left. (Photo courtesy of Redding *Record Searchlight*)

Two from Cave Junction in fatal helo accident

Northern California crash includes deaths of seven Grayback Forestry firefighters

By MICHELLE BINKER
IVN Staff Writer

Two men from Cave Junction are among those involved in what some officials are calling the deadliest fire-fighting aviation accident in U.S. history in which nine men died and four were injured when their heavy-lift helicopter crashed in Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

The Iron Complex Fire accident in Northern California occurred Tuesday, Aug. 5. It claimed the lives of seven Grayback Forestry firefighters, among them Steven Caleb Renno, 21, of Cave Junction. Grayback is based in Merlin, near Grants Pass.

Among the injured is one of the helo pilots, William (Bill) Coultas, 44, of Cave Junction. Coultas, an employee of Merlin-based Carson Helicopters. He is listed in critical but stable condition at UC Davis Burn Center in Sacramento.

He is being treated for second- and third-degree burns on approximately a third of his body, and underwent surgery and skin grafts late last week. Coultas likely will remain at UC Davis for another month, followed by rehabilitation. Family members, including his wife, Chris, have gone to Sacramento to be with him.

Coultas and his wife, who own the CJ Video Mart/Radio Shack store in Cave Junction, are graduates of Illinois Valley High School.

Names of those from Southwestern Oregon who died are listed as firefighters

Shawn Blazer, 30, of Medford; Scott Charleson, 25, Phoenix; Matthew Hammer, 23, Grants Pass; Edrik Gomez, 19, Ashland; Bryan

Three injured firefighters -- Medford residents Rick Schroeder, 42; Michael Brown, 20, and Jonathan Frohreich, 18 -- were treated

on take-off from a remote helipad in the Trinity Alps Wilderness, approximately 20 miles northwest of Junction City and some 30 miles from Redding.

The helo was on its third trip to shuttle firefighters from the Buckhorn Fire to base camp when the accident occurred. Other firefighters on the helipad awaiting transport helped pull survivors from the wreckage.

The injured apparently were able to escape the accident before it went over an embankment, but that has not been verified.

National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigators were at the scene as of Thursday, Aug. 7. Kitty Higgins, an NTSB board member, reported on Friday, Aug. 8 that the cockpit voice recorder had been recovered and sent to Washington, D.C.

Ten interviews were conducted with witnesses who stated that the helicopter rose and moved forward more slowly than normal, Higgins said.

The witnesses indicated that when the aircraft was approximately 50 feet off the ground and 150 yards from its take-off point, the nose struck a tree, and rotor strikes fol-

lowed before the helicopter descended rapidly.

It struck the ground, rolled onto its side, and filled with thick smoke. It then went over an embankment and caught fire, ending up approximately 1,000 feet from the top.

"The accounts are very consistent," Higgins said. A full report on the details of the accident may not be available for a year, she indicated.

Andy Mills, director of helicopter operations for Carson, said that Schwanenberg and Coultas were experienced heavy-lift pilots with more than 25,000 combined flight hours.

A six-member structures team spent some four hours at the site of the crash, Higgins said, conducting surveys and documenting conditions at the site. It was anticipated that more investigators would comb the scene.

The fire-fighting community has responded online with an outpouring of condolences and messages of sympathy on Grayback Forestry's Website blog.

And crews on other current wildfires have challenged one another to raise funds for the Wildland Firefighter Foundation. The fund helps support the families of fallen firefighters.

Contributions should include a reference to the Iron 44 Incident. Visit www.wffoundation.org.

Another firefighter, a USFS employee, died in a felling incident battling the Iron Complex fires in July.



Andy Mills, director of helicopter operations for Carson Helicopter, describes the crash for news media at the Grants Pass Airport in Merlin on Thursday, Aug. 7. (Photo by Michelle Binker, *Illinois Valley News*)

Rich, 29, Medford; and David Steele, 19, Ashland.

Other victims of the accident were U.S. Forest Service inspector pilot James N. Ramage, 63, of Redding; and Carson Helicopters pilot Roark Schwanenberg, 54, from Lostine, Ore.

A memorial service for the fallen Grayback firefighters will be held Friday, Aug. 15 at the Jackson County Fairgrounds in Central Point. The program is scheduled from 10 to 11:30 a.m. The tribute is being organized by Grayback Forestry and Carson Helicopters with assistance from the interagency fire community.

and released from California hospitals.

There is an unconfirmed report that another firefighter from Cave Junction was going to be aboard the helicopter that crashed, but that a fellow firefighter went on instead. The two men, according to the report, played "Paper, Scissors, Stone" to see who would get the last seat, as there was one firefighter too many for that particular flight.

The helo, a Sikorsky S-61N Fire King was owned and operated by Carson, a Pennsylvania company with craft at sites nationwide including Merlin. The aircraft crashed

Flags ordered to half-staff in honor of fallen Oregon firefighters

All flags at public institutions are being flown at half-staff from sunrise Monday, Aug. 11, through sunset Friday, Aug. 15 in memory of the firefighters and crew who died in a helicopter crash in Northern California on Tues-

day, Aug. 5.

Gov. Kulongoski, who ordered the lowered flags, said, "Year after year we depend on these committed individuals to protect our homes, our communities and our forests in the face of an

unpredictable, unrelenting Mother Nature.

"Their dedication to this precarious job serves us all.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and communities that have lost a loved one," said the governor.

"We are forever indebted to them and to those who gave their lives bravely helping others," he concluded.

The firefighters who died were part of a crew from Grayback Forestry Inc., a wildfire contracting company based in Merlin. The helicop-

ter was owned by Grants Pass-based Carson Helicopters. The craft was being used to fight the Iron Complex of fires in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The crash claimed the lives of seven Grayback Forestry employees and injured three others.



A Toyota 4Runner incurred fire and smoke damage Monday, Aug. 11 on Barlow Street. The vehicle was driven by Barlow Street resident Elana

Barlow. Illinois Valley Fire District and Oregon Dept. of Forestry responded to the 3:27 p.m. alarm. (Photo by *Illinois Valley News*)

Oregon first: solar highway

Oregon is installing the nation's first solar demonstration project in a highway right-of-way, "moving the state a step further in its role as a leader in renewable power development," announced Gov. Kulongoski.

The governor and ODOT, in partnership with Portland General Electric (PGE) and US Bank (USB), unveiled the project that will help light the way for drivers at the Interstate 5 and Interstate 205 interchange in Tualatin. The project will involve 594 solar panels.

The demonstration project is an "All Oregon" effort,

as Oregon companies will supply materials, design and install this collaborative project. SolarWorld AG of Hillsboro will supply the solar panels; PV Powered Inc. of Bend will supply the inverter.

The 104-kilowatt solar photovoltaic system -- covering approximately 8,000 square feet of space and roughly the length of two football fields -- will produce an estimated 112,000 kilowatt hours a year, or 28 percent of the 400,000 kilowatt hours used to light the interchange.

It's anticipated that the \$1.3 million project will be finished in December.