

Illinois Valley News

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Hot weather drives up fire danger

Prolonged hot weather in Southwest Oregon is driving up the fire danger level on lands protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry's Southwest Oregon District. The fire danger climbs to "extreme" (red) at 12:01 a.m. Monday, July 22.

Many of the public fire prevention regulations currently in effect will remain unchanged, but people who have been using power-driven equipment until 1:00 p.m. will now have to shut down at 10:00 a.m. The Oregon Dept. of Forestry's regulations affect state, private, county and Bureau of Land Management forests and other wildlands in Jackson and Josephine counties.

These restrictions do not affect industrial operations. The Industrial Fire Precaution Level (IFPL) will remain at Level 2 (two).

People using mowers, weed whackers and brush cutters in areas of tall, dry grass and weeds will need to stop using the equipment between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., and a one-hour fire watch must take place after shut down. This restriction does not apply to people mowing a green lawn, or to the commercial culture and harvest of agricultural crops.

Chain saw users must also shut down at 10:00 a.m., have an axe, shovel and fire extinguisher at the work site, and conduct a one-hour fire watch after the saw is shut off.

Cutting, grinding or welding metal must also stop by 10:00 a.m., and these activities may only be conducted in an area cleared of potentially flammable vegetation. Water and fire-fighting tools must be at the job site.

The users of other spark-emitting machinery, such as generators, wood splitters and chippers, must also shut down by 10:00 a.m. and perform a one-hour fire watch afterward. In all cases, users need to have an axe, shovel and fire extinguisher or a water supply at the site where the machinery is used.

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(Photo courtesy of Ken Bain for *The Illinois Valley News*)

A blow out was the cause of a single vehicle wreck that shut down Kate's Redwood Bar and Grill Monday, July 15. According to owner Kate Bain the business was able to reopen Tuesday, July 23. No injuries were reported.

Sheriff encourages more neighborhood watches

By
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IVN Contributing Writer

The Josephine County Sheriff's Office used to have 22 patrol officers. Now there's just two deputies left to patrol over 1,600 square miles.

Sheriff Gil Gilbertson's staff, down from 98 people to 37, currently includes three additional contract deputies that serve on the marine board, respond to calls regarding problems on BLM lands and one 40 hour-per-week deputy who works in Cave Junction.

"We're barely getting the job done. It's all pretty bleak at this point, but we'll continue to do the best we can," Gilbertson said. "There is no doubt that criminals are emboldened. We're seeing a lot more burglary, theft and assaults."

Gilbertson warns that criminals are becoming more sophisticated in their approaches, are frequently working in groups and often utilize different vehicles while doing reconnaissance. Criminals walk up to houses and look inside, even during the day, to discern

peoples' habits and often break in when residents are at work. Gilbertson wants residents to change their routines and confront anyone they don't recognize.

"If someone doesn't have a legitimate reason to be around or won't identify themselves, send them on their way," Gilbertson said. "Most people have cell phones they can use to take pictures of strangers."

"Even when calls come in, I don't have people to respond. Residents need to get license plate numbers from unknown vehicles and write down physical descriptions that include clothing, body size, race and hair color," Gilbertson said.

Gilbertson is encouraged by the increase in neighborhood watches, but says more are needed and advises people that if they're not already in a group, they should call his office and he'll help get a new watch set up. He stressed that neighborhood watches have a direct impact on crime and that "now is the time" for people to reach out and get to know and rely upon their neighbors.

"People need to watch each others' backs," Gilbertson said.

Due to county law enforcement shortages, the

Oregon State Police, whose primary mandate is to ensure highway safety, is now forced to respond to many calls. This means there's more drunk and reckless drivers and more serious accidents, according to both Gilbertson and OSP's Sergeant Jeff Proulx, who works out of the Grants Pass office.

"We're handling more county calls than we'd normally take," Proulx said. "And that means the highways are less safe."

OSP can only respond to life-threatening calls. For example, with domestic disputes, if both parties are still around, OSP will get there as soon as possible, but if one party is gone, then people are instructed to call the sheriff the next day, according to Proulx.

"Response times depend on where the call comes from and where my people are at that time," Proulx said, explaining how if there's only one person around, then callers must wait until another trooper can drive down from Central Point. "That'll take up to an hour."

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Gustavson hopes to keep Forks Park open

By
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IVN Contributing Writer

Willa Gustavson is devoted to kids. During the school year, she can be found at Evergreen Elementary where she volunteers as the coordinator for the Start Making A Reader Today

(SMART) program.

Gustavson has built the program into a success over the past few years with adults and some high-school students each volunteering an hour a week to read with the youngsters. She's also developed a group of respite readers who fill in when a regular reader encounters

schedule conflicts.

The former city councilor became involved with efforts to save Illinois River Forks State Park last year when the state threatened to close it. Together with other volunteers, she traveled to several Oregon State Parks and Recreation (OPRD) board meetings to help persuade decision-makers that this resource is highly valued by the community.

One of the most effective actions demonstrating community resolve was delivering dozens of pro-park letters written by Gustavson's SMART students to the OPRD board. A temporary reprieve was granted, contingent on community volunteers helping with park maintenance over the next few years.

This summer, Gustavson has volunteered to lead a free "Junior Ranger" program for 6 to 12 year-olds at the Forks. The three-week program takes place for one hour beginning 9:30 a.m. on Fridays.

See Park on A-10



(Photo by Judy Hoyle, *Illinois Valley News*)

Junior Ranger Coordinator Willa Gustavson (left) looks on as Linda Naydol points out a cottonwood tree to Junior Ranger participants John Mancuso and Lily Williams.

Sheriff's substation needs volunteers

By
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The sheriff's office substation in Cave Junction, located in a space below city hall, is in need of more volunteers.

Only three half-day shifts are now being filled and the unit needs at least six more volunteers. Dick Butler is in charge of the substation and can be reached at 541-592-5151 between 1 and 3 p.m. most afternoons.

Sheriff's office volunteers are required to lease their own uniform from the main office at the jail located behind Wal-Mart at 1901 NW F Street in Grants Pass; and must agree to attend a monthly meeting at the Merlin substation. The Grants Pass office phone is 541-474-5123.

Free training is provided for those accepted into the program. Duties are varied, but do not involve strenuous activity and all interested adults, including seniors, are welcome to apply. A standard four-page Josephine County application form can be downloaded from www.jocosherriff.us, which also offers a non-emergency crime reporting link. Volunteers must be fingerprinted and undergo background checks.

Tasks include investigating non-sufficient fund checks, administrative duties such as typing or filing, and assisting with disasters or special events. Those willing and able to travel

to Grants Pass could help with court security by checking handbags at the door or assist at the county jail by issuing concealed weapons permits, doing fingerprinting or other office work. According to Oregon State Law 404, the sheriff is also responsible for every search and rescue operation in Josephine County and over 14,000 volunteer hours were donated in 2011, the most current year for which statistics are available.

There are no volunteer patrols in Cave Junction at this time because the vehicles were sold to help meet operating expenses. However, the city has contracted with the sheriff's office for one full-time deputy who will work variable hours for 40 hours a week during the upcoming fiscal year.

Another opportunity to serve includes conducting presentations on how to create a Neighborhood Watch group. Peter Good is the coordinator for this program and can be reached through the Merlin substation at 541-474-5135. Office hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. weekdays or a message can be left during off-hours. Good tailors his 1.5 hour presentation to individual group concerns, e.g. difficult neighbors, or home security, and he's willing to remain after the presentation as long as people have questions.

See Volunteers on A-10