

Illinois Valley News

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Beautiful danger



(Photo courtesy of Cheri Johnson for the, *Illinois Valley News*)

A smoky view of from Spalding Mill Pond Friday, July 20. What makes the light so amber, red and/or orange when there’s wildfire smoke in the air? The particles in the air can scatter shorter wavelengths of light (purple and blue) more than longer wavelengths (orange and red). But when you add a lot more particles, such as smoke, more wavelengths get scattered, leaving only the orange and red wavelengths that we see.

Area wildfire round-up

Annette McGee Rasch
IVN Contributing Writer

Last July 15, everyone heard the thunder that started rumbling at dawn and didn’t stop until late afternoon. Hundreds of new fire starts gave testament to where the lightning struck throughout southwest Oregon, signaling the start of this year’s dance with wildfire that will likely last until the fall rains come.

In and around the Illinois Valley, firefighters from the U.S. Forest Service (FS), Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Illinois Valley Fire District (IVFD) and the Sun

Star Fire Club accomplished an amazing degree of coordination to limit fire growth as they initially attacked the blazes. With most of the smaller fires now extinguished or contained, focus now centers on the Natchez and Klondike fires.

The Natchez Fire, located 15 miles southeast of Cave Junction (outside of Takilma and into California), has grown to a few thousand acres. Existing roads and trails are being widened to utilize as containment lines. Hotshot crews and burn-out operations are also in the mix, plus aircraft support is helping slow fire growth.

SEE FIRE ON A-3

String of structure fires keeps shorthanded IVFD hopping

Tristan Stocker
IVN Contributing Writer

The Illinois Valley saw a slew of house fires break out during the first few weeks of July - one of which proved fatal - which is always worrisome when the fire danger level is in the yellow or red.

On July 3 at 12:45 a.m., Illinois Valley Fire District (IVFD) responded to a structure fire at 450 Beebe Drive. Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and American Medical Response (AMR) were also on the scene.

The house belonged to Illinois Valley resident Mark Jordan who lived with his girlfriend and his dog, all of whom are safe and have since received charitable donations from

E Clampus Vitus and the American National Red Cross.

“There was no way I could put it out... but I tried,” Jordan said. “It got to the point where I had to call 9-1-1.”

Jordan was less than pleased by the response time. According to him, it took the IVFD crew about an hour to arrive by which time the structure was completely engulfed; however, with limited manpower, there’s only so much they can do.

Then just three days later on July 6, crews responded to a single-story structure fire in the 500-block of Mesa Verde Drive around 2 a.m. wherein two people died.

IVFD arrived to find a woman unconscious and attempted to resuscitate her, but failed. Her husband was in the back of the

house, but the fire was too far gone for the crew to attempt interior operations.

According to IVFD Fire Chief Dennis Hoke, the fire was investigated by the Oregon State Fire Marshal’s office and the cause was deemed undetermined.

“The point of origin was in the back of the house where the husband was and there was no indication that it was a suspicious fire,” Hoke said. “It was an accidental fire.”

And three days after that fire, IVFD, along with Grants Pass Fire and Rural Metro, responded to a structure fire in Selma at the Smoking Duck - Jordan’s watering hole of choice.

SEE IVFD ON A-9

Cave Junction finds a new Christmas Tree

Laura Mancuso
IVN Editor

It is always sad to watch a memorable tree in the community being cut down, but there is always a bright side, especially when it comes to Christmas trees.

On July 17 the big tree in the Junction Inn parking lot aka the Cave Junction Christmas tree was cut down in anticipation of the new Grocery Outlet scheduled to open at the end of this year.

Many in the I.V. community are sad that the tree had to be cut down. John Gardiner community activist is worried about the “loss of our iconic ‘big tree’ because it was seen by many to stand for the essence of the landscape of our region. Gardiner also feels it is a negative impact for the community with regards to symbolism - “that it could be felled so easily gives a terrible signal to those clear cutting their lots – for whatever reason ... I wonder how many tons of CO2 that our ‘Christmas tree’ sequestered every year?”

But not all in the community are saddened by the loss of the tree. Holly Yanase of Cave Junction, a working wife and mother of three children expressed that she wasn’t worried about the tree being cut down, “The tree was just sitting in a dirt lot providing shade for transients.” But Yanase was very excited to have Grocery Outlet coming so she could buy “discounted produce and canned goods” for her family.

SEE TREE ON A-9

Public Works has opt-out options for roadside spraying

CJ Schatza
IVN Contributing Writer

Where to turn if you don’t want Roundup sprayed on your property in the county

The tremendous capacity for plant growth that we have in southern Oregon greatly contributes to the natural beauty that makes our region a great place to live. Unfortunately, this biodiversity can be hazardous to motorists and pedestrians alike when vegetation encroaches on roadways, which restricts visibility, creates obstacles, increases the risk of fires, and accelerates the process of road degradation.

To combat the effects of uncontrolled plant growth, the Josephine County Public Works developed an Integrated Vegetation Management Program. One component of the program, and a controversial one at that, is the use of herbicides, commonly known as Roundup weed killer.

The National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) provides objective, science-based information about pesticides and pesticide-related topics to enable people to make informed decisions. NPIC is a cooperative agreement between Oregon State University and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

According to the NPIC, pure glyphosate is low in toxicity, but products usually contain other ingredients that help the glyphosate get into the plants. The other ingredients in the product can make the product more toxic. Products containing glyphosate may cause eye or skin irritation. People who breathed in spray mist from products containing glyphosate felt irritation in their nose and throat. Swallowing products with glyphosate can cause increased saliva, burns in the mouth and throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Fatalities have been reported in cases of intentional ingestion.

Pets may be at risk if they touch or eat plants that are still wet with spray from products containing glyphosate. Animals exposed to products with glyphosate may drool, vomit, have diarrhea, lose their appetite or seem sleepy.

In a letter to the editor that the *Illinois Valley News* received earlier this summer from Cave Junction resident Mrs. Peno, she claimed that her cat Julian suffered nerve damage after being exposed to Roundup that had been sprayed in the roadside ditch in front of her house. Regardless of your views relating to the use of herbicides on county roads, it is safe to assume that you want to avoid harm to yourself, your pets and children, or other living things on your property that herbicides can cause. This option is available to all county residents.

If you are opposed to the use of Roundup on the county-maintained roadside immediately adjacent to your property, Public Works provides the ability to waive their vegetation management services. In response to Peno’s letter to the editor, Linda Ebert of Selma recounted her own experience with this “Request not to apply herbicides for vegetation and agreement to maintain roadside vegetation.”

Laura has something to say, check out Her Life in the Valley of Riches on A-10.

SEE ROUNDUP ON A-9