

KFD, continued from Page A1

Punchbowl Falls and then spreading 20,000 acres, and went right to work protecting the Bonneville Dam and nearby fish hatcheries.

"We were in the heart of it, right in the thick of it. We were fighting fire," said Perkins, who was at his first conflagration. "There's so much fire that you have to choose your battles. There's no way that we can completely extinguish this. We're basically just trying to keep it from continuing to run and minimize its spread."

Coburn drove the Keizer engine, which was outfitted to fight wildland fires with different hoses, fittings, attack methods and water volumes. Throne and Perkins deployed the hoses while Cummings directed the crew.

As a hiker, surfer, kite boarder and photographer, Perkins had spent a lot of time in the Columbia Gorge.

"I love Eagle Creek," Perkins said. "I've done that hike a handful of times. It's absolutely gorgeous and I've done a number of hikes up in that area. I was up there when it froze this winter so I saw it completely frozen with ice, Multnomah Falls all iced up. I love taking pictures of that stuff. That was surreal to see it in that state and then see it burnt up."

Keizer was originally assigned to the night crew but as winds spread the fire east,

Cummings, Perkins, Coburn and Thorne stayed on for an additional long day shift.

The crew didn't get back to camp in Odell until Tuesday, Sept. 5 at 9 p.m.

"I really enjoy it," Cummings said. "I'm young so I'm all about it. I don't have kids. I don't have too many priorities back home. I grew up doing it. It does get tiring. I was covered in poison oak from the Chetco (fire) so after a while your body starts taking a toll. It doesn't matter how young you are. You just start getting tired."

Along with protecting the dam, the Keizer crew spent that first 28-hour shift keeping the fire from jumping over to the westbound side of Interstate 84 and checking on homes in the area to make sure there weren't any spot fires.

"That first 36 hours is something that I'll never forget," Perkins said. "You're seeing trees that are 80 feet tall with a flame that's 80 feet above them."

The crew spent the maximum two weeks working on the Eagle Creek fire, returning to Keizer on Sunday, Sept. 17. Each morning began with a 5:15 wakeup call. The crew typically returned to camp between 8-8:30 p.m.

Some of their other duties included putting out spot fires along I-84, prepping and talking to people about the fire in the houses nearby, assisting Hood River with a grass fire and watching the Multnomah Falls Lodge.

The citizens of Cascade Locks showed appreciation towards the firefighters, making them meals.

"They would come out to the fire

line. They didn't need to do that and they did it consistently," Perkins said. "People wanted to help in anyway that they can. We certainly felt the gratitude and respect of the community. We were there to protect people's homes and they saw that presence and it gave them a sense of security."

Cummings, who grew up in California and worked for the Oregon Department of Forestry for three seasons, said what made the Eagle Creek fire unique was its proximity to a big city, Portland, and historical landmarks like Multnomah Falls.

The Oregon State Fire Marshal kept the crew prepared.

"It's never a guessing game," Cummings said. "They're so organized with their tactics and strategies. They always have exactly what they want you to do and it's always laid out. They were pretty good at predicting it (fire) and knowing what it was going to do and where it was going to go and what ridges it was going to run."

Keizer firefighter Matt Dryden joined Cummings on the Chetco Bar fire.

"When they started moving evacuation levels closer to Brookings, they needed more resources, that's why they called for another structural task force," Cummings said. "We were full structure protection."

That included clearing debris and ignitable items away from homes and setting up sprinkler systems provided by the fire marshal.

After 15 years, Keizer Fire was able to get back on the conflagration list thanks to an increase in staff, training and equipment.

LAW, continued from Page A1

mobile devices while parked, but the bill asserts that it is not legal to use the device while at a stop light or stop sign.

According to the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), there were 917 crashes, 14 fatalities, and over 1,000 injuries caused by drivers using a cellphone from 2011-2015. Second offenders, or first offenders who contribute to a crash, can find themselves paying up to \$2,500 in fines, and third offenders can be faced with up to \$6,500 in fines or a year in jail.

The bill isn't just increased fines and strict enforcement, however. Starting January 1, 2018, the bill will allow courts to offer first-time offenders the option to suspend their fine and instead take a distracted

driving course.

House Bill 2597's mandates are only one component in Oregon's efforts to reduce distracted driving; ODOT's DriveHealthy campaign hopes to incentivize drivers to practice safe habits with friendly competition. The campaign lets organizations and individuals use the LifeSaver app from Life Apps LLC to log cellphone use while driving and send scores to ODOT's monthly leaderboard. Playing is easy: the less you use your phone while driving, the higher your score.

ODOT is confident in the campaign, as a similar one in Boston reduced distracted driving among participants by 47 percent.

"While technology helped create the problem," said ODOT Director Matthew Garrett. "Technology can also help provide a solution to distracted driving."

Church hosts Superhero party

Jesus Our Jubilee Church is hosting a Superhero Celebration for kids on Saturday, Sept. 30.

Families and children are welcome at the free event with games prizes, hot dogs and re-

freshments. Wonder Woman and Superman also expected to visit the shindig.

The event is slated for 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the covered shelter in Claggett Creek Park, 1400 Dearborn Avenue N.E.

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