

BY MATT RAWLINGS Of the Keizertimes

Whether it was an historic ice storm, drama at city hall, or kids going back to school after a year of distance learning, there were no shortage of newsworthy stories in Keizer.

Here were some of the top stories that were featured in the *Keizertimes* in 2021.

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The Chris Eppley saga



On Thursday, March 4, then-Keizer City Manager Chris Eppley discharged a firearm in his office inside the Keizer Civic Center around noon. Eppley had served as Keizer's city manager since 2000.

According to a press release, the Keizer City Council had retained an outside investigator to investigate the accidental discharge of a firearm by Eppley. No one was injured in this incident.

Weeks later, allies of the embattled city manager turned out in droves urging the Keizer City Council to use restraint as they determine what actions would be taken next.

In a description of the incident, Eppley said he was "preoccupied" when the discharge happened. He stated that he brought pieces of firearms into his office on previous occasions, but claimed it was the first time he ever carried a full, loaded firearm into the Keizer Civic Center. Doing so would appear to have been a violation of ORS 166.370, which prohibits "possession of firearm or dangerous weapon in public building or court facility, states any person who intentionally possesses a loaded or unloaded firearm or any other instrument used as a dangerous weapon, while in or on a public building."

Conviction on such a charge is a Class C felony, but no police report appears to have been made regarding the incident. Instead, Eppley contacted the city's human resources director, the chair of the civic center's safety committee and the mayor.

On Monday, April 5, Eppley resigned from his position. He was offered six months salary and a year of insurance coverage after tendering his resignation.

Since his resignation after discharging a gun in his office, Eppley has been hired by Marion County as a community development manager and appointed the temporary city manager of Detroit.

Assistance requests surge in wake of unprecedented storm



It was a stressful and exhausting 72-hour period for the first responders at Marion County Fire District #1 (MCFD1) and Keizer Fire District (KFD) during what was one of the worst ice storms in recent history.

From Feb. 12 to Feb. 14, MCFD1 responded to 234 emergency calls, a 350%

increase in their daily average call volume -79 calls were for emergency medical services (EMS) and 155 calls were for downed trees or power lines.

Due to the number of high priority calls, limited on-duty staffing and a low number of volunteers, dozens of lower priority calls went unanswered — fortunately no personnel injuries were reported.

"It was absolute craziness, almost controlled chaos. It was an overwhelming number of calls, one after the other. There was no break," MCFD1 Fire Chief Kyle McMann said. "There were instances of wives bringing dinners to their husbands on scene because they hadn't stopped working for 24 hours. But that's what we are trained to do. You just have to keep going."

Ann-Marie Storms, the KFD deputy fire marshal, reported that the district responded to 152 calls over the same 72-hour period. Storms also said that on a busy day, the district receives between 19 and 20 calls over a 24-hour period.

By 8 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 13, KFD had already responded to more than 50 calls for downed power lines — KFD had one engine and three medic units on-call, full of a mix of career staff and volunteers.

McMann said that some people had to wait anywhere between 30 minutes to several hours to receive service and that 911 dispatch had, at one time, had hundreds of calls pending. KFD reported similar issues with pending calls.

MCFD1 had three medic units on duty during the 72-hour shift, but McMann said two stations of volunteers played a pivotal role in the process.