

AND....The 2015 WINNER of the Review's
St. Johns Bridge picture contest is: Paulette Porter with this stunning photo!

ST. JOHNS REVIEW

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Paulette Porter Photo: 2015 St. Johns Bridge Contest Winner

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Highway 30 crash sends plumes of black smoke over St. Johns

By Barbara Quinn
The Review

The crash of a semi truck carrying gasoline on Highway 30 mobilized Portland Fire & Rescue, local police and sent an alarming cloud of black smoke high above the St. Johns neighborhood on the morning of Sunday, December 13. According to a police report, the truck ran off the road just south of the St. Johns Bridge around 8:45am. It went down an embankment, collided with a power pole, flipped and plowed into parked train tankers carrying asphalt. The truck driver died at the scene. The truck's fuel load spilled and ignited under the train cars causing a 3-alarm fire with flames shooting as high at 40 feet. St. Johns' hillside residents and Cathedral Park visitors reported hearing several explosions and witnessed the massive flames across the river. Firefighters battled the blaze for over an hour before gaining control.

As far as can be ascertained, news of the incident was not made public for over an hour, though some St. Johns residents received reverse 911 calls advising them to stay inside due to the then unknown nature of the burning chemical. In spite of media reports that the community was advised to "hunker down," the majority of



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neighborhood residents were not informed about possible pollution from the unknown burning substance. Instead, residents carried on regular Sunday morning activities while prevailing winds carried dense smoke directly overhead starting at 9am.

In fact the neighborhood was unusually active with the Holiday Marathon runners on Willamette Blvd. and onlookers cheering them on. Some runners reported breathing difficulties and about 100 were picked up and removed by school buses around 11:30 am as reported by USA Today (Deadly crash sparks Ore. train tanker fire, Dec. 13, USA Today Network). The marathon was subsequently can-

celed due to air pollution.

A non-emergency line supervisor said the emergency notification system is limited to residents within a certain radius of an incident to keep the system from being overwhelmed. He also said only residents with landlines are automatically notified of emergencies with reverse 911 calls.

"Hwy 30 Fire"
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Neighbors were frightened when they saw this huge plume of smoke coming their way. They didn't know what was causing it, how bad it was going to get, or if the smoke was toxic.
More Photos on Pages 4 & 5

