

Iron workers brave perils while building Portland tower

PORTLAND (AP) — Stand on the roof of Portland and look down. Way down.

You could die a dozen ways up here. You could slip off the open deck. You could fall down the elevator shaft. A gust of wind...a swinging beam...

Cables no thicker than Bic pens run around the deck and keep you safe.

Safe? In the distance, Mt. Hood feels about eye level.

It's not natural to work up this high unless you're an ironworker. These days, they're crawling all over the Park Avenue West Tower, which pokes up behind the downtown Nordstrom and can already be seen from almost any corner of the city.

Ironworkers are the ones who swing iron, bully it into place, weld it, bolt it and walk on it with cat-like tread. The only things that stop them are ice, high wind or lightning, which scatters them faster than quitting time.

From the ground, they look interchangeable in their hard hats and reflector vests. Up close, they radiate swagger. They come off their shifts at 3:30 p.m., tools swaying from their belts, maybe a cigarette hanging from a lip, cracking jokes, heading home.

They look at the Portland

skyline and see their handiwork. They may toil in obscurity, but their work will last long after they're gone.

"We don't go to the office," says veteran ironworker Mark Johnson, "we build it."

Thus their nickname: Cowboys.

Like walking on a sidewalk

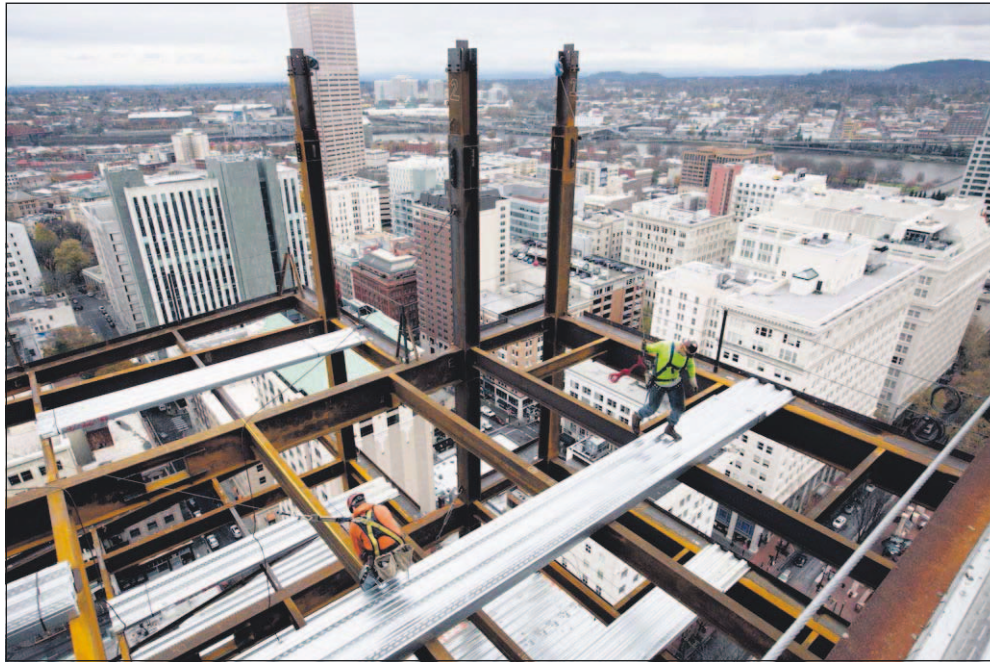
Ironworkers such as Johnson and Brian Vellee are a tight group and not exactly chatty. Their work speaks for itself. Why would anyone want to talk to them about their jobs? Put steel in their hands, they know what to do. Routine. Repetitive. No big deal.

"Way of life," Johnson says. Vellee nods. "Starts getting typical after a few floors," he says.

Part of the job is having a "very healthy respect for heights," Johnson says. But that takes getting used to.

Working at elevation actually gets easier the higher up you go, says Vellee, an ironworker for 24 years. "You can't focus. You see just what's in front of you."

Later, as if to demonstrate, two men saunter along beams little wider than their feet, suspended over nothing. Nylon or steel cables, strong enough to withstand 5,000 pounds of force,



AP Photo/The Oregonian, Kristyna Wentz-Graff
Nik Pries, left, and Paul Diaz spread decking on the framework of the 23rd floor of the Park Avenue West Tower currently under construction in downtown Portland.

tether them to beams. Hard hats, eye protection, gloves and over-the-ankle boots complete the uniform.

"After you do it for a while, it's like walking on a sidewalk," says beamwalker Paul Diaz, once he's safely back on the deck.

Peril is everywhere

For months, the Park Avenue building has been rising

from the dead after the recession stopped construction for four years. Work resumed in February, ironwork in April. Now, approaching pedestrians crane their necks to take it in as ironwork climbs at a pace of one floor every four days.

When the building is finished in December, 2015, it will be the fourth tallest in Portland. Owned by TMT Development, which built the nearby Fox Tower (27 stories) and Broadway Building (24), Park Avenue West will top out at 501 feet, a third as high as the Empire State Building. Offices, retail and high-end apartments will fill it. Hoffman Con-

struction is the contractor.

Right now, it's about half done. The concrete core is complete. Hoop skirts of iron surround the core to the 25th floor. Next come steel decks, concrete floors and fireproofing the beams. Exterior glass already begins to enclose the lower floors.

The top deck feels like a plaza — open to the sky with exhilarating views north, south, east and west. You could have a party up here, except the elevator only goes to 19, so revelers would need to climb the last three stories on ladders lashed to a yawning elevator shaft.

Peril is everywhere, even just walking on the corrugated deck. Its three-inch ridges feel as tenuous as treading on train tracks. Wind blows from all directions, capable of lifting a hardhat and landing it blocks away.

And it's noisy. While the wind moans through the iron latticework, the air booms, crackles, buzzes and whines, echoing off surrounding buildings.

Ironworkers don't seem to notice the noise or danger. They yank on beams dangling from the crane with chokers — cables — thick enough to anchor ocean liners. A welder showers the deck with sparks.

Some of the 42 workers on this job — one is a woman — bash bolts with eight-pound sledgehammers. Others attach cables so beam walkers can tie off. Handrail guys install stairs. A raising gang secures iron for the crane. A bellman talks to the crane guy, telling him to "boom up," "boom down." As soon as a load of iron lifts into the air, a second bellman on the top deck takes over talking to the crane.

Beams arrive by flatbed truck, 3,600 tons for the entire building. They start as steel, forged in mills in Indiana and Arkansas, then are loaded onto trains to Tigard, where they're cut, drilled, sanded and bent into shape for everything from ceiling beams to vertical posts. Once fabricated, steel is called iron. A single beam can weigh 14 tons, as much as two elephants.

ACCUWEATHER® FORECAST FOR ASTORIA

Astoria 5-Day Forecast

Today
Partly sunny and chilly
44° / 31°

Friday
Mainly cloudy
48° / 36°

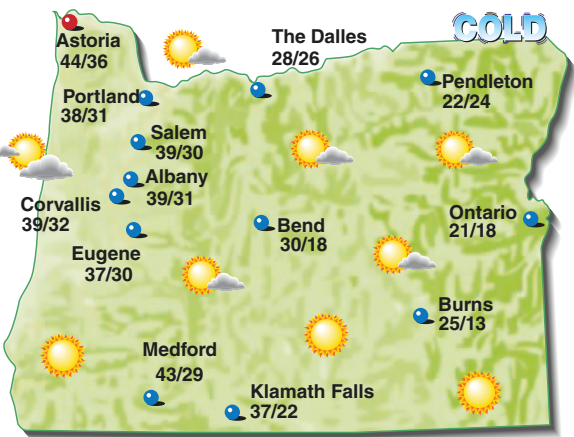
Sunday
Periods of rain
51° / 46°

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are Today's highs and tomorrow night's lows

Saturday
Intervals of clouds and sunshine
49° / 38°

Monday
Mostly cloudy
54° / 46°

Oregon Weather



Almanac

Astoria through Tuesday.

Temperatures	High	Low
High	41°	25°
Low	25°	25°
Normal high	49°	37°
Normal low	37°	25°

Precipitation

Yesterday	Month to date	Normal month to date	Year to date
0.00"	10.57"	9.89"	72.87"
0.00"	67.26"		

Sun and Moon

Sunrise today	7:58 a.m.
Sunset tonight	7:58 a.m.
Moonrise today	2:22 p.m.
Moonset today	4:26 a.m.



Under the Sky

Tonight's Sky: Comet C/2012 Q2 Lovejoy may reach naked-eye visibility below Orion.

Today's Tides

Time	High	Time	Low
10:48 a.m.	9.7 ft.	4:42 a.m.	2.9 ft.
none		5:53 p.m.	-0.3 ft.

Regional Cities

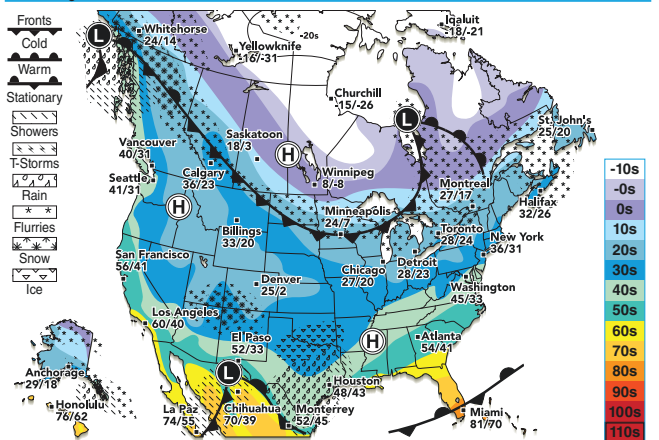
City	Today	Fri.
Baker City	20 10 s	27 14 c
Bend	30 17 s	40 18 pc
Brookings	52 38 s	52 39 s
Eugene	37 24 s	44 30 pc
Ilwaco	45 37 pc	49 40 c
Klamath Falls	37 18 s	42 22 s
Medford	43 26 s	49 29 s
Newport	45 31 s	48 35 c
North Bend	49 33 s	51 36 s

City	Today	Fri.
Olympia	41 26 pc	41 31 c
Pendleton	22 12 s	34 24 c
Portland	38 25 s	41 31 pc
Roseburg	40 29 s	47 32 s
Salem	39 24 s	44 30 pc
Seaside	44 37 pc	48 40 c
Spokane	19 13 c	25 13 c
Vancouver	39 23 s	41 30 c
Yakima	27 15 pc	33 18 c

National Cities

City	Today	Fri.
Atlanta	54 41 pc	52 46 r
Boston	34 27 s	39 24 s
Chicago	27 20 s	29 23 pc
Denver	25 2 s	38 15 s
Des Moines	34 17 s	32 23 pc
Detroit	28 23 pc	33 20 pc
El Paso	52 33 c	49 30 sn
Fairbanks	18 -7 pc	7 -4 s
Honolulu	76 62 pc	76 65 sh
Indianapolis	29 23 s	33 26 pc
Kansas City	33 22 pc	36 27 pc
Las Vegas	44 31 pc	47 30 s
Los Angeles	60 40 s	62 42 s
Memphis	41 36 r	41 40 r
Miami	81 70 c	82 72 pc
Nashville	43 34 pc	42 39 r
New Orleans	60 53 c	69 64 r
New York	36 31 s	41 31 s
Oklahoma City	32 27 i	38 32 i
Philadelphia	39 30 s	43 30 s
St. Louis	38 30 pc	40 33 pc
Salt Lake City	28 13 pc	32 20 pc
San Francisco	56 41 s	56 42 s
Seattle	41 31 pc	44 36 c
Washington, DC	45 33 s	48 35 pc

Today's National Weather



Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day. Forecast high/low temperatures are given for selected cities. Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.

Public meetings

MONDAY
Youngs River Lewis & Clark Water District Board, 6 p.m., 34583 U.S. Highway 101 Business.

TUESDAY
Miles Crossing Sanitary Sewer District Board, 6 p.m., 34583 U.S. Highway 101 Business.

Death

Dec. 29, 2014
SMITH, Benjamin Charles, 45, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary in Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Lotteries

OREGON
Wednesday's Pick 4:
1 p.m.: 9-8-9-6
4 p.m.: 5-3-3-5
7 p.m.: 4-7-6-9
10 p.m.: 7-5-5-0
Wednesday's Megabucks: 10-13-23-25-35-39
Estimated jackpot: \$4.9 million
Powerball: 17-27-37-40-53, Powerball: 35, Power Play: 2
Estimated jackpot: \$120 million

WASHINGTON
Wednesday's Daily Game: 6-9-7
Wednesday's Hit 5: 09-23-25-27-31
Estimated jackpot: \$130,000
Wednesday's Keno: 04-11-15-22-24-28-29-34-37-40-42-43-44-45-46-47-56-57-61-72
Wednesday's Lotto: 02-06-13-27-35-39
Estimated jackpot: \$2 million
Wednesday's Match 4: 06-12-19-23

Knappa water flushing on tap

KNAPPA — The Knappa Water Association is flushing water mains from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., starting Tuesday. Users may expect periods

of low water pressure and/or cloudy water. If these conditions persist, call the Knappa Water office at 503-458-6461.

On the record

Safeway theft arrests
• At 5:34 a.m. Saturday, Astoria Police arrested Lacy Rose Buck, 24, Astoria, for third-degree theft after she allegedly stole several items from Safeway, placed them in her satchel and drove away from the store. Employees got her license plate number and reported the theft.
• At 9:07 p.m. Tuesday, Astoria Police cited and released Robert Shawn Murphy, 21, Astoria, for third-degree theft at Safeway.

complaint that a dark blue minivan with no license plates was swerving on the Youngs Bay Bridge. Police located Scheider, who had a reported blood alcohol content of 0.18.

• At 2:33 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 20, Astoria Police arrested Douglas Reid, 40, Astoria, for DUII at the Mini Mart. Officers were leaving another call when they saw Reid park at the Mini Mart and noticed he appeared impaired. After a field sobriety test, Reid was arrested. Reid's blood alcohol content was 0.14 police said.

Crash

• At 1:12 a.m. Wednesday, Oregon State Police responded to a vehicle vs. elk crash on U.S. Highway 26 near milepost 11. A Volkswagen was traveling westbound and crashed into elk, lost control after the collision and rolled onto the passenger side coming to a rest in the eastbound lane. Medix transported the passenger, John E. Heiss, 85, of Huntington Beach, Calif. The driver, Steve P. Heiss, 36, of Huntington Beach, Calif. was not injured in the crash.

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Obituaries may be edited for spelling, proper punctuation and style. Death notices and upcoming services will be published at no charge. Notices must be submitted by 9 a.m. the day of publication.

Obituaries and notices may be submitted online at www.dailyastorian.com/obituaryform, by email at ewilson@dailyastorian.com, placed via the funeral home or in person at The Daily Astorian office, 949 Exchange St. in Astoria. For more information, call 503-325-3211, ext. 257.

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