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JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Customers browse through the selection of fireworks and the firework stand in the parking lot of Fred Meyer in Warrenton.

Combustible mix

Authorities advise people to stay safe on Fourth of July

By KYLE SPURR
The Daily Astorian

Unusually dry weather, flocks of tourists and legal marijuana are creating a potentially dangerous combination for local law enforcement this Fourth of July weekend.

Add in the annual concerns about illegal fireworks, and officials have their hands full.

"I think most local folks are pretty well versed in what they can and cannot do or should or should not do," Astoria Fire Chief Ted Ames said. "When we get such a large influx of out-of-town folks, therein lies the issue we have, especially folks from different states. But my biggest concern this year is how dry it is."

Each year, Ames suggests people follow the state Fire Marshal's Office directives known as the Four B's of safe fireworks use:

- Be prepared before lighting fireworks and keep water available by using a garden hose or bucket;
- Be safe when lighting fireworks and keep children and pets away from fireworks;
- Be responsible after lighting fireworks and never relight a dud. Wait 15 to 20 minutes then soak it in a bucket of water before disposal;
- Be aware and use only legal fireworks and use them only in legal places.

Ames said people also need to be aware that Oregon has different fire-



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Tom Ank helps customers at the fireworks stand in the Fred Meyer parking lot Thursday.

works laws than Washington state or Idaho. Fireworks that explode, eject balls of fire, fly into the air, or travel more than 6 feet on the ground or 12 inches into the air are illegal in Oregon.

The Astoria Fire Department spent time inspecting fireworks stands and assisted with preparing the Astoria fireworks display for the Fourth of July.

With high fire danger around the region, Ames said, people need to use common sense and not light off fireworks in their backyards, but rather on pavement or cement.

The dry conditions have already caused Ilwaco, Wash., and South Bend, Wash., to ban the use of projectile and aerial fireworks. No bans are in effect in Clatsop County.

"It makes me nervous over here with the hillside and urban forest we

have," Ames said. "The biggest thing for folks to do is use their good common sense and be safe doing this, please."

Extra patrols

Seaside Police Chief Dave Ham said his department will be assisted by Oregon State Police and the Cannon Beach Police Department during the Fourth of July.

State police will send nine troopers to help with traffic enforcement and crowd control in downtown Seaside. Cannon Beach Police will send two officers to Seaside.

Ham said his department sends officers to help with Cannon Beach's large events such as the recent Sandcastle Contest. Having Cannon Beach Police send officers for the Fourth is just them returning the favor, he said.



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian
Fireworks on display at the fireworks stand in the Fred Meyer parking lot.

In addition to the 11 extra officers, Seaside's own patrol officers plan to work overtime.

The extra staffing is necessary, Ham said, especially with the holiday falling on such a warm weekend. Temperatures are expected to reach triple digits in the Portland metro area and Willamette Valley.

"The weather pattern is one of the best we have seen," he said. "With the heat in the valley, (visitors) are going to be coming here."

Besides preparing for more visitors, Ham is prepping his officers on how to handle the recent legalization of marijuana in Oregon. People can use marijuana in their own homes as of July 1, but are not allowed to take the drug out in public, which Ham is concerned people will try to do during Fourth of July festivities.

"We are little bit concerned and paying attention to that," Ham said.

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Riverwalk Inn lease still up for grabs

Lease transfer never happened

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The Astoria Riverwalk Inn might still be up for grabs, a month after the Port of Astoria Commission voted to allow the lease to transfer from Brad Smithart's Hospitality Masters to Ganesh Sonpatki's Param Hotel Group.

Sonpatki offered to pay off Smithart's large debts to the Port, the city of Astoria and Clatsop County, in exchange for assuming his lease.

But the lease transfer never happened, Smithart still owes lots of money, and the people trying to make a deal happen are having trouble reaching him.

"With Brad, it's always hard to tell whether this is a purposeful stalling," Jim Knight, the Port's executive director, said. "Maybe it's because he's negotiating with another potential party."

Smithart did not respond to multiple requests for an interview.

Knight estimated Smithart's past-due rent and revenue sharing owed to the Port at upward of \$250,000. Susan Brooks, director of finance for the city of Astoria, said Smithart owed the city \$92,000 in lodging taxes and \$13,000 in past-due water

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Recreational pot bill goes to governor

Medical shops could sell to all adults in October

By HILLARY BORRUD
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon medical marijuana dispensaries would be allowed to temporarily sell limited amounts of pot to all adults in Oregon starting Oct. 1, under a bill headed to Gov. Kate Brown for a signature.

Lawmakers want to provide a legal way for Oregonians to purchase marijuana, because the state's recreational marijuana retail system likely will not launch until late 2016. Possession and consumption of marijuana for adults age 21 and older became legal in Oregon Wednesday under Measure 91, which voters passed in November.

Senate Bill 460 would allow recreational customers to purchase cannabis seeds, plants that are not flowering and up to one-quarter ounce of marijuana flowers or leaves from medical marijuana dispensaries. The Oregon House passed the bill 40-19 on Thursday. The legislation had

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Court tosses exceptional murder sentence

Former Oregon police officer had been sentenced to 88 years

By NATALIE ST. JOHN
EO Media Group

OLYMPIA, Wash. — The Washington State Supreme Court has ruled that the state Court of Appeals made the right decision in May 2014 when it threw out convicted murderer Brian Brush's exceptional 88-year sentence.

In an opinion filed Thursday, a panel of four justices concluded that by providing jurors with guidance about how to evaluate the case, the Pacific County Superior Court violated a rule that prohibits judges from

commenting on evidence.

That decision means that Brush is still guilty of first-degree murder, but Pacific County will have to hold the sentencing phase of his trial again. And Brush — who has been serving his sentence in the Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla — will have to return to Pacific County until his fate has been decided again.

The ruling "... is manifestly unfair to the victim and her family, and an appalling miscarriage of justice," Pacific County Prosecutor Mark McClain said in an email Thursday. "Mr.

Brush received an appropriate sentence for his actions the first time around and now this family has to be put through this again. Simply tragic."

McClain said the county has two options. First, prosecutors could try to sentence Brush to something in the standard sentencing range for first-degree murder with a firearm. That would result in a sentence of somewhere between 25 and about 31 years, minus time served. Second, the prosecutors could again try to convince the judge that Brush deserves an exceptional sentence.

McClain said he has spoken briefly with the victim's family. He plans to talk with them again

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Brian Brush, center with bald head, sat with his attorneys in the Pacific County Courtroom during his original sentencing in February 2012. He will be heading back to court for reconsideration of that sentence following a Washington State Supreme Court decision Thursday.

