

Cascadia: 'I'm probably scaring the hell out of people'

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expect from city services," Herzig said. "And the reality of our situation with a Cascadia event is that there's going to be very little service left."

Later this month, a panel of four experts — Althea Rizzo, geologic hazards program manager at Oregon Emergency Management; Tyree Wilde, warning coordination meteorologist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; Patrick Corcoran, coastal natural hazards specialist with Oregon State University; and Neal Bond, protection unity forester at the Oregon Department of Forestry — will speak at the Liberty Theater on Astoria and Clatsop County's state of disaster readiness.

The Community Emergency Preparedness Forum on May 31 will cover a range of natural disasters facing the North Coast, from winter storms to wildland fires to a catastrophic earthquake and tsunami.

A short question-and-answer session will follow each presentation, and a longer dialogue will take place at the end. Tables with resources and emergency preparedness gear will be set up in the lobby.

The goal is partly to make citizens aware of the city and county's plans and resources to confront disasters. But the forum will also drive home an unpleasant truth: In the first days post-Cascadia, survivors may be on their own.

"Even though it may be tough to take in, it's something we need to start facing up to. Knowledge is power, particularly in something like this," Herzig said. "It's going to happen, we just don't know when. So the more we can prepare for it, the better."

Devastating to infrastructure

Astoria does not face the same tsunami threat as Seaside and Cannon Beach because the city is several miles upriver from the coast, although it still faces significant waterfront inundation from rising sea levels, Astoria Fire Chief Ted Ames said.

The primary threat is the earthquake itself.

"If we were to face a seismic event, like ... the 9-point-something-magnitude earthquake off the coast — that nearshore event — we know that it will be devastating to infrastructure," Astoria Police Chief Brad Johnston said.

IF YOU GO

What: Community Emergency Preparedness Forum

Where: Liberty Theater, 1203 Commercial St.

When: 6 to 8:30 p.m., May 31

Doors open at 5:30 p.m.

Bridges will fail. Buildings will fall. Large swaths of earth will liquefy and produce landslides. City roads and streets — crushed, collapsed or covered in debris — will be impassable.

Even with the best of intentions and most professional of forces, Astoria police and fire departments will have severely diminished — perhaps nonexistent — rescue capabilities after a megquake and tsunami.

"If we have that scale of an event, you will not see first responders rolling up in their patrol cars. It's not going to be possible," Johnston said. "When you think about Astoria and the geography and the nature of the roadways, there's a good chance it's going to be very difficult to get places (with) things other than horses, mountain bikes, dirt bikes, ATVs and those kinds of things."

The fire department will be in the same situation: "I don't think it's realistic to think that we would be driving fire trucks around town trying to help people," Ames said.

Self-sufficiency

"I can't sit here as fire chief and tell you exactly what's going to happen, 'cause I don't have a clue," Ames said. "I just don't think that it's a real great outlook when we think about a major event."

"I'm probably scaring the hell out of people, but that's the way it is," he added.

Corcoran said that, as soon as high-magnitude earthquakes occur, power lines fall and arc, and gas and water lines break.

"So now you've got gas fires starting all over the place and no water to put them out," he said. "People's current sense of, 'Well, when my house is on fire, the entire fire department comes to help me,' is wrong."

Johnston advises citizens to prepare themselves, mentally and materially, such that they could survive without first responders and even help their neighbors.

"It's really important for people to have that ability to care for themselves in those

initial hours because it's going to be tough," he said, adding that emergency management specialists now tell people to prepare for a period of self-sufficiency lasting at least 14 days. "It will be some time before government is able to re-establish that infrastructure, and the people are going to have to be prepared for that."

"Professionals don't like to say — especially cops and firemen — that they're not going to be there for you," Corcoran observed. "So, when they're telling us that they're not going to be there for us, I think you really need to pay attention to that."

A reminder

Focusing on emergency preparedness is one of the City Council's goals for the year.

"We've been lagging behind places like Cannon Beach and some others. They're much more exposed to the tsunami, so they're much more aware of the danger," Herzig said. "In Astoria, pretty much most of us are safe from the tsunami, but the preceding earthquake is going to be devastating, and we need to start becoming aware of that."

It takes a serious mental effort for many people to imagine themselves in an emergency as dire as Cascadia, let alone how they would act, he added. "Nobody wants to go there."

Corcoran sees this resistance to contemplating natural disasters as a product of evolutionary hardwiring: creeping threats, whether Cascadia or climate change, tend not to register as important. Of course, this condition makes preparing for these threats all the more challenging.

"In general, preparing for hazards is something, as human beings, we tend not to do," he said. "We have to remind ourselves to do that once in a while."

The emergency preparedness forum, he said, is intended as such a reminder.

"We haven't been around the block before on (Cascadia). We have to share what the research says, what happened in Japan, other kinds of places," he said. "When it happens again, I guarantee you, we're going to wish we would've done more."



George Vetter/For EO Media Group

Seaside High School senior Caitlynn Howe plays a victim during a countywide training exercise for the Community Emergency Response Team program in December.



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Safety and survival equipment are shown in the back of a truck during a tsunami drill with the Coast Guard in January.

Election: Goldthorpe still 'staying hopeful,' and patient

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Goldthorpe would face McIntosh in a runoff if her vote count drops below 50 percent after all ballots are counted and the results are official.

"We are still staying hopeful and trying to be patient," he said.

Clatsop County Clerk Valerie Crafard estimates there

are nearly 300 ballots left to be counted. More than 100 are challenged ballots that do not have signatures or the signatures do not match voter records. Other ballots were torn, wet or need the markings to be enhanced. The clerk's office is also waiting on ballots that were dropped off in other counties.

Official results will be cer-

tified in June.

As of the most recent count Wednesday morning, McIntosh had collected 5,021 votes, Goldthorpe had 2,895 votes, and Woltjer earned 2,057 votes.

A total of 1,907 votes in the judgeship race were left blank and discarded as undervotes. Had even a fraction of voters who skipped the race made

a decision, their votes could have influenced the outcome.

The candidates believe many of these voters may not have known enough about them or the court system to confidently cast a vote.

"You look at those under-votes, and it's people saying, 'I really don't know and I'm not going to cast a vote just to vote,'" McIntosh said.

Goldthorpe could request a recount, but he has not entertained that idea.

"I would have to consider that based on what the final result was," he said.

The three candidates are vying to replace Judge Philip Nelson, the county's longest serving elected official, who is retiring this year after 24 years on the bench.



David Goldthorpe

Port: Budget could grow by \$10 million, depending on FEMA help

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"Additionally, the 2016-17 budget will recognize the need for the Port, as a significant contributor to the region's economic health, to lead in the facilitation of important job-creation strategies," he said.

Knight said that includes the Port spurring the creation of a state-of-the-art boatyard and repair facility on the Skipanon Peninsula, creating a strategic plan for the airport in concert with local agencies, establishing a master plan for the central waterfront with the city of Astoria and determining the highest and best use of North Tongue Point.

A \$10 million maybe

The budget could grow by another \$10 million, depending on how much the Port gets from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to repair storm damage on Pier 2. Will Isom, staff accountant for the

Port, said the agency is in the process of creating work plans for each site with damage. FEMA would potentially reimburse the Port for repairs.

Isom stressed the grants and FEMA money heavily skew the budget. He said the Port is expecting \$8.8 million in operating revenue, and \$7.2 million in operating expenses, without the more than \$16 million expected in grants and disaster relief, \$736,000 in county tax revenue and \$130,000 in timber taxes.

Capital projects

Besides the \$10 million for disaster repairs and \$5 million for runway rehabilitation, the Port is looking to finance \$1.5 million to develop a stormwater treatment facility on Pier 3.

The Port was put on notice by the state Department of Environmental Quality after copper levels in storm runoff near piers 3 and 1 were above the limit allowed on an

industrial stormwater permit. Maul Foster Alongi, an environmental consulting firm, designed a bioswale for Pier 3 that will treat stormwater using a series of settling ponds and seafood shells to filter out metals. The Port is seeking help from tenants to finance the system.

The Port is also spending \$60,000 to install stormwater treatment at North Tongue Point after similar issues.

Staffing

The Port is planning to employ the equivalent of nearly 35 full-time employees with a payroll of more than \$2.9 million in salary, wages and benefits. The agency mostly provides full-time positions, with the exception of a largely part-time security staff.

Last fiscal year, the Port secured \$724,106 in grant revenue, which was good by its own standards but much less than the \$2.6 million in annual grant revenue ports of

similar size averaged. To get more support, the Port is budgeting for a grant writer as an assistant to Matt McGrath, the director of operations.

The Port is also budgeting for a manager for North Tongue Point, an industrial facility the agency leases from Missoula, Montana-based

Washington Development Corp. but wants to buy.

The Port Budget Committee next meets at noon on May 31.

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