

## WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

## Spicer resigns position as White House press secretary

WASHINGTON — White House press secretary Sean Spicer, President Donald Trump's embattled spokesman during the first six months of his presidency, is resigning his position, according to two people with knowledge of the decision.

Spicer's decision appears to be linked to the appointment of a new White House communications director, New York financier Anthony Scaramucci. The people with knowledge of the decision spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the personnel matter publicly.

Spicer's daily press briefings had become must-see television until recent weeks when he took on a more behind-the-scenes role. Deputy press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders has largely taken over the briefings, turning them into an off-camera event.

Spicer spent several years leading communications at the Republican National Committee before helping Trump's campaign in the general election. He is close to White House chief of staff Reince Priebus, the former RNC chair, and several of the lower-ranking aides in the White House communications shop.

Scaramucci is expected to play a visible role as one of Trump's defenders on television. But Spicer and other officials questioned his hiring as communications director ahead of the president's push to overhaul the tax system and other policy issues. One of the officials said Spicer objected to Trump's vision for the future of the press operation.

## Tougher distracted driving law to take effect in Washington

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Washington drivers will have to put down their phones or else face tougher penalties under a new distracted driving law that takes effect this weekend.

Texting or holding a phone to your ear is already against the law in the state, but the new measure now prohibits anything else that requires drivers to hold their electronic devices — including phones, tablets and other electronic gadgets — while behind the wheel. That means no reading of incoming text messages while driving, or watching a quick video while stuck in traffic or sitting at a red light.

"If you're on the road, you're off the phone," said Darin Grondel, director of the Washington Traffic Safety Commission.

Under the measure, "the minimal use of a finger" to activate, deactivate, or initiate a function of a personal electronic device while driving is still allowed.

The standard traffic fine of \$136 would apply to a first offense but would increase to about \$234 for a second offense. The first distracted driving offense would also be reportable to insurance companies, which could raise rates like any other moving violation.

Another section of the new law also says a person who engages in "any activity not related to the actual operation of a motor vehicle" — like eating or putting on makeup — is subject to pay an additional fine of \$99. It only applies if an officer catches a driver being distracted while committing a standard traffic offense, such as running a stop sign because their coffee spilled.



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian  
Oregon Department of Forestry personnel in the Astoria district are busy preparing equipment and vehicles for what authorities are saying could be an above-average fire season. More photos online at DailyAstorian.com

## Fire season: District has six engines at its disposal

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At the start of the season, open burning was banned with a few exceptions, including permitted burn barrels, as well as recreational fires in designated areas that follow strict guidelines, such as attending them at all times and building them no closer than 50 feet from dune grass or 15 feet from a structure. But starting Saturday, further restrictions will include a ban on all campfires and nonindustrial use of chain saws.

Particularly in Clatsop County and for reasons not entirely known, most forest fires are caused by people, Protection Unit Forester Neal Bond said.

## Danger levels

The firefighters cover about 450,000 acres during their reg-



Routine maintenance of equipment such as fire hoses is standard practice at the Oregon Department of Forestry district headquarters in Astoria as crews and other personnel prepare for fire season.

ular patrols. During their shifts, they also update the 10 fire-danger-level signs throughout the county, as needed. Officials are hoping this season will be as calm as the 2016 period, which was a significant relief

from the three previous years.

In case of a large wildfire, such as the 48,000-acre blaze currently ripping through the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains in California, the district has six engines at its

disposal. Five of them hold 400 gallons of water, while another can carry a 1,300-gallon tank. The district also owns a dump truck that can be converted to hold a 2,000-gallon tank. Other resources include 3/4-inch to 1 1/2-inch hoses and a smaller 80-gallon tank that can be easily transported in smaller trucks.

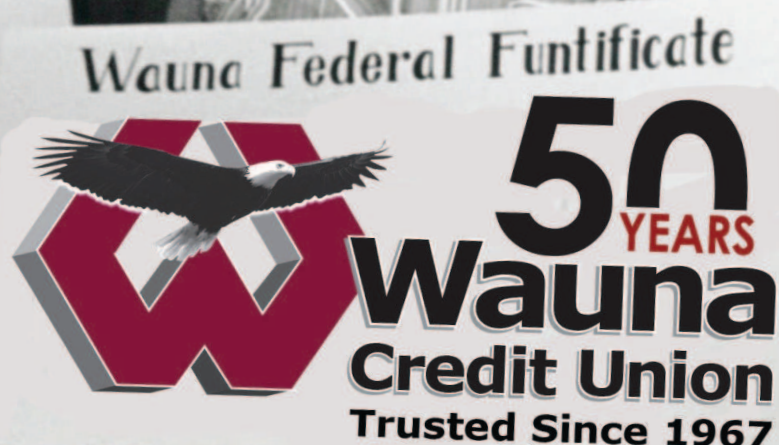
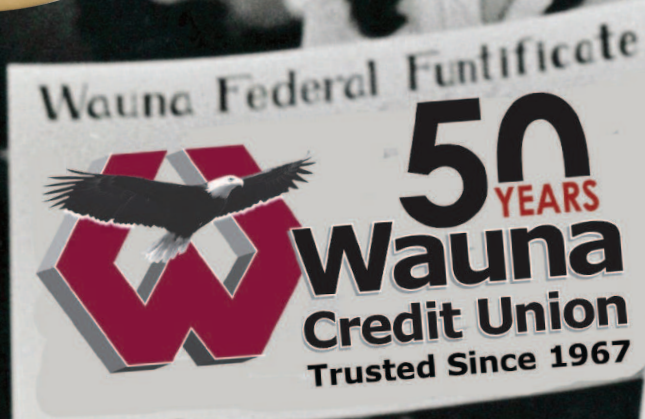
When necessary, the district has varying levels of access to 30 different aircraft stationed in other parts of the state as well as southern Washington. The Astoria office also works with other districts, as well as rural fire departments in the area.

"We help each other out and share resources, as needed," Bond said.

Bond said fire seasons typically last through the first couple weeks of October depending on rain levels.

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