

# Sirens: Mayor Balensifer emphasized the need for individual responsibility

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In Washington state, warning sirens are managed by the state, Brown said. In Oregon, the decision to maintain or not maintain warning sirens has been left to counties. Up and down the coast, counties and communities have made different decisions.

Tillamook County chose to dismantle around 30 pole-mounted, 1960s-era tsunami sirens in 2012, and has not replaced them. Officials there argue that other technology like the ability to send out mass texts or automated reverse 911 calls are more efficient and cost-effective warning systems. At the time, they estimated it could cost \$100,000 to replace the devices, money the county did not have. They said, echoing opinions expressed in other communities, that the shaking from a massive earthquake is the most obvious warning that a tsunami could be on the way.

Brown agrees up to a point. "We believe having a redundant system in place is never a bad idea," she said.

She pointed out that the Warrenton and Hammond area sees thousands of tourists each summer who may not be familiar with the region or its hazards.

Money is an issue for many counties when deciding whether or not to install sirens, she added, and it is no different in Warrenton. Brown estimated installation costs would be about \$15,000 per siren just for sites where there is already a power source available.

Cannon Beach also received sirens from the county and wants to eventually put them in highly trafficked beach areas that may or may not have a nearby source of electricity; the costs to install will be much higher. Brown has applied for a

**'We believe having a redundant system in place is never a bad idea.'**

**Tiffany Brown**

Clatsop County's emergency management director

homeland security grant to cover the costs of installing the sirens at the Hammond and Warrenton fire stations. She and city officials had hoped to secure a third site at Fort Stevens State Park, but were unable to come to a formal arrangement before the grant application deadline.

It is unlikely that all six sirens will be used in Warrenton, Brown said, pointing to the example of Cannon Beach. The city had to use a few of the sirens it received just for parts.

Sirens are in place elsewhere in the county, in Seaside and Gearhart. Astoria does not have sirens.

Warrenton has slowly been moving toward better emergency preparedness. The sirens are a big step, said city commissioners. Emergency preparedness and outreach is one of four goals they discussed for the year. City Manager Linda Engbretson has been working on updating the city's emergency operations plan, which lays out how city staff and officials will conduct city business in the face of emergencies both large and small.

Mayor Henry Balensifer, who keeps a go-bag stocked with tools and items he would need in case of a variety of emergencies, emphasized the need for individual responsibility.

# Night watch: Seaside interested in program

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Awareness of Property Watch is still low, Randall said.

"A lot of people aren't aware of the effectiveness of it because it's after hours or on weekends," Randall said. "It allows us to go there, talk to a person and say, 'This isn't a place you should be. Could you please move on?'"

## Coordination

The program allows businesses to coordinate with police ahead of time, giving officers the authority to remove people without a trespass complaint.

When businesses under the contract notice recurring issues or see signs of previous camping such as leftover garbage or human waste, they can alert police. In return, officers check those locations as much as possible during patrols.

"Anyone anywhere knows you can call 911, but I think if the police department has been to your facility, I just think it's a lot smoother," said Bruce Jones, the maritime museum's deputy director and an Astoria city councilor.

Randall said the program has led to more "positive contacts" with officers and businesses, allowing owners to ask questions about building security.

"Most of the time, businesses are calling us because something unpleasant is going on. This provides us the opportunity to speak with them before something bad has happened," said Randall, who added that owners typically ask about items like locks and lighting. "It can go off into something they've always wanted to ask a police officer about but never have."

Police have encouraged businesses to post signs in windows warning against behaviors such as unreasonable noise, fighting, threatening others, littering and remaining on the premises for more than 20 minutes. For the most part, the signs have been a deterrent.



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Properties in downtown Astoria have utilized several options to deter loitering, including fences and signs.



**Authorities say signs posted in the windows of businesses have been effective in reducing loitering and other problems.**

discussions about implementing a smaller version of the program.

"We run into very similar types of situations down here," Ham said. "It seems like it's a neat program."

Ham added that the Seaside program would be smaller in scope. The city would like to curb some issues in areas where both tourists and homeless people tend to go. But issues like public urination are not as frequent.

A public meeting may take place in April.

In Astoria, meanwhile, the small but growing program will be re-evaluated each year. Continued interest from police and business owners will be key.

"I don't know of any reason the program would not continue," Jones said. "I would hope the program would continue indefinitely."

"It seems that when the exclusion criteria signs go up, then most of the prior issues that a property or business was having have either stopped or had a noticeable decrease," Randall said. "There have been some instances where the exclusion criteria signs have been ripped down and the owners have had to put some new ones up."

Property Watch could be shifting where homeless people congregate. More people have been illegally camping in the woods within city limits, a trend that may be linked to the program.

"Many of the places that the homeless were sleeping at are now areas where they

know they are not supposed to be," Randall said. "Sometimes the campsites are a quick hike up into the woods and are not so easy for an officer to go by for a quick look."

## A version in Seaside

Seaside Police Chief Dave Ham has attended Astoria's Homelessness Solutions Task Force meetings and has eyed the Property Watch program. The chief said his department has had preliminary dis-

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