

## DISPATCH: County's cost for operating the center in 2014-15 is \$2.023 million

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administrations did not want to address the situation. Hermiston's consolidation of its dispatch center with the county in 2014 brought a new light to the issue. Rowan said Hermiston and Pendleton, which also contracts with the sheriff's office for communications services, want other users to pay their fair share.

Lieuallen said Pendleton is on the hook to county for \$285,000 and Hermiston about \$296,000. The county handles 9-1-1 and other dispatch calls for about 30 other agencies as well. Umatilla County's cost for operating the dispatch center in 2014-15 is \$2.023 million, and more than \$1.1 million of that came from the county's general fund.

Lieuallen and Rowan last week addressed questions on the matter from the Pilot Rock City Council. She said changes in the law regarding the use of 9-1-1 funds is also part of the problem.

Before 2012, Oregon cities handed over their 9-1-1 tax revenue to the appropriate public-safety answering point — or PSAP — the dispatch center that handles calls for a region. Not all cities did that, she said, so starting in 2012 the Oregon Office of Emergency Management collected the tax from cities and sent the funds to the dispatch centers. The 9-1-1 tax revenues, though, can only

pay for emergency calls, Lieuallen said, and not for the multitude of other duties dispatchers handle, including dog complaints, welfare checks or assisting officers during a traffic stop.

The county received \$6,976 from the state for Pilot Rock's 9-1-1 for this fiscal year, she said, about \$200 less than in 2001. But the number of calls for service has increased. She said cell-phones are the reason.

Oregon's 9-1-1 tax is 75 cents per month for a landline phone and 75 cents per month for a cellphone account, but not per cellphone. And prepaid phones do not pay the tax at all, though a new state law will rectify that starting in October.

Lieuallen said she calculates the communications bills using population figures from Portland State University. The formula excludes Umatilla Tribal Police, Milton-Freewater and Oregon State Police, which have their own call centers. Based on her math, she said, Pilot Rock makes up 2.11 percent of the population so its dispatch costs should come to \$24,801. But she stressed that is not how much the sheriff's office is seeking this year.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said the sheriff's office still needs to do a better job explaining to its partners how it arrives at the costs. And he and other police leaders are asking if it may be time to for the

communications center to function on its own, and not under the umbrella of the sheriff's office.

Roberts said Umatilla County's dispatch services are an anomaly in Oregon, where most centers are stand-alone entities that receive revenue as a taxing district, have a board of directors and a manager. Even if that idea is only talk, the more pressing issue is about representation. Currently agencies are paying into the system but have no say in how that system operates.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston is on the same page as Roberts. "Everybody paying needs to have input into the structure of what the dispatch center looks like," he said.

Edmiston also advocated for police agencies to pay using a population formula while fire and ambulance ought to pay per call.

Rowan told Pilot Rock city leaders it is easy to see where Hermiston and Pendleton are coming from:

"The question they are asking is if you are charging us, why aren't you charging them?" he said.

Rowan said the answer is in easing the small cities into their full bill, with the goal of everyone contributing what they should. Just how long that could take, though, no one is saying.

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## Oil industry challenges rules meant to stop train explosions

Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. — The U.S. oil industry has filed a court challenge to new rules aimed at reducing the risk of catastrophic accidents involving crude moved by rail, following a string of fiery derailments in recent years.

The American Petroleum Institute's petition to the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C., would set aside a requirement for improvements to railroad tank cars that are known to fail during accidents.

API spokesman Brian Straessle said the politically influential trade group supports better tank cars, but companies need more time to get them on the tracks.

"We definitely support upgrades to the fleet," Straessle said. "It's a matter of timing."

At least 24 oil trains have been involved in major fires or derailments during the past decade in the U.S. and Canada, including a 2013 accident in Quebec that killed 47 people. The latest derailment came last week, when a train carrying crude from the Bakken region derailed and caught fire in central North Dakota, forcing the evacuation of a small town.

The Department of Transportation rules unveiled May 1 call for an estimated 43,000 cars that primarily haul crude to be phased out or retrofitted by 2020.



Tom Stromme/The Bismarck Tribune via AP, File

**A line of oil tanker cars sit on the BNSF railroad tracks May 6 in Harvey, N.D. The U.S. oil industry is challenging new rules aimed at reducing the risk of catastrophic accidents involving crude moved by rail.**

Similar improvements to cars primarily carrying ethanol must be completed by 2023.

Transportation Department spokeswoman Suzi Emmerling said the rules will make crude transportation safer.

"We believe the rule will stand up to challenge in court and remain hopeful that industries impacted by these changes will accept their safety obligations and follow the new regulations," she said.

The petition filed late Monday also asks the court to set aside a requirement for advanced braking systems on fuel-hauling trains. The oil industry contends the brakes are unproven and would be too costly.

The braking rule has drawn similar objections from the rail industry, which is considering its own legal challenge to the rule, said Ed Greenberg, spokesman

for Association of American Railroads.

Railroads also have concerns about tank cars, but they are the opposite of the oil industry's worries. Railroads want the cars — many of which are owned by oil companies — to be fitted with "thermal blankets" that wrap around the tank to prevent fires from spreading during a derailment.

Another challenge to the rules could come from environmental groups and safety advocates who say the deadlines set by the Transportation Department are not fast enough.

Also of concern is a provision exempting trains with fewer than 35 tank cars from the tougher construction requirement.

"You could have 34 crude oil cars on a train and none of them would have to meet the new standards," Boyles said.

## GAS: Estimates \$3.2 million for construction of new gas line

Continued from 1A

Smith said the issue has already prevented a potential developer from bringing 250 jobs to the area because the natural gas it needed to heat its warehouse wasn't available.

The natural gas problem also caused DuPont Pioneer to halt a planned multi-million-dollar expansion in Hermiston last year, which is what started the city on the path to getting into the natural gas business. Originally the company was told by Cascade Natural Gas that the infrastructure needed to serve the expansion would cost \$450,000, causing the company to select Hermiston for its expansion, but later Cascade Natural Gas said there had been a mathemat-

ical error and the upgrade would actually cost \$2.3 million.

If the city and developers had to bear the whole cost of the construction but Cascade Natural Gas would end up owning the infrastructure, the city reasoned, then why not create a municipal utility so the city would have ownership of the pipeline and could reap all of the profits from it?

Right now the city has a rough estimate of \$3.2 million for construction of the transmission line, but hiring an engineer as approved by the city council Monday will allow the council to put together a better cost-benefit analysis for the creation of the utility.

Smith said city staff have been looking into grants and other state funding options.

When the city formed Hermiston Energy Services, its municipal electric utility, it paid for the initial formation with bonds that are being paid off using the revenue from customers' electricity bills. He said something similar would likely take place with the natural gas utility.

Cascade Natural Gas spokesman Mark Hanson said the company did not file an appeal to the circuit court decision allowing Hermiston to proceed on the advice of its legal council, and moving forward it will "continue to focus on providing safe and reliable service to our natural gas customers in Hermiston."

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## Drilling to resume near BP's ill-fated blowout

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Deep-water drilling is set to resume near the site of the catastrophic BP PLC well blowout that killed 11 workers and caused the nation's largest offshore oil spill five years ago off the coast of Louisiana.

A Louisiana-based oil company, LLOG Exploration Offshore LLC, plans to drill into the Macondo reservoir, according to federal records reviewed by The Associated Press.

Harper's Magazine first reported the drilling plans late Tuesday.

LLOG's permit to drill a new well near BP's site was approved April 13 by the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, an agency overseeing offshore oil and gas drilling operations. The company's exploration plan was approved last October following an environmental review by a sister agency, the Bureau of

Ocean Energy Management.

The company, a privately owned firm based in Covington, Louisiana, will be looking to extract oil and gas deep under the Gulf of Mexico's seafloor, an undertaking that proved catastrophic for BP.

"Our commitment is to not allow such an event to occur again," said Rick Fowler, the vice president for deep-water projects at LLOG. "LLOG staff keeps the memory of what happened ... fresh in our minds throughout our operations, both planning and execution."

On April 20, 2010, a drilling rig owned by Transocean Ltd. and hired by BP to drill into the Macondo field experienced a series of problems that led to a massive blowout. Investigators later faulted BP and its contractors for fatal missteps.

The drilling rig, in waters about 45 miles off the Loui-

siana coast, was engulfed in flames. Eleven workers were killed, 17 were seriously injured and more than 100 had to be evacuated.

BP, its contractors and federal regulators struggled to contain the blowout and kill the out-of-control well over the course of the next 87 days. In all, the federal government calculated that about 172 million gallons spilled into the Gulf. BP put the number much lower, closer to 100 million gallons.

Richard Charter, a senior fellow with the Ocean Foundation and a longtime industry watchdog, said it would be cause for concern if a small company resumed drilling in the reservoir.

Charter said drilling into that reservoir has proved very dangerous and highly technical, and raises questions about whether a company like LLOG has the financial means to respond to a blowout similar to BP's.

## RSVP: 'We've been operating on a wing and a prayer'

Continued from 1A

McMurphy, who directs the community action program's Area Agency on Aging, said CAPECO can't afford the matching requirement.

"We take the money from our transportation program to pay the match to RSVP," she said.

CAPECO drivers use a fleet of six vehicles to transport people to medical and business appointments in a program called Dial-A-Ride. Virtually all the revenue, she said, goes to pay the RSVP match, with little left over to maintain aging vehicles.

"We've seen a ripple effect with our fleet," McMurphy said. "We've been operating on a wing and a prayer."

The move affects two paid RSVP workers. RSVP employee Shirley Harrison will lose her RSVP job, but continue her auditing and money managing duties at CAPECO. Area RSVP Director Karen Hanson has been laid off.

"Karen did a fantastic job for us," McMurphy said.

The CAPECO Board voted to disconnect with RSVP on April 24. Volunteers and stations (places where the volunteers serve) recently received letters explaining the change.

McMurphy said volunteers may continue to serve in the same roles as always. However, CAPECO will no longer screen the volunteers and RSVP supplemental insurance will no longer cover volunteers when they're working. Drivers who deliver Meals on Wheels or transport clients to appointments will

continue to receive mileage reimbursement.

McMurphy said money was not the entire reason for severing ties with RSVP. The Corporation for National & Community Service, the federal organization which funds RSVP programs, "has been getting much more prescriptive."

The list of volunteer jobs is more narrowly defined, for example food service is no longer allowed as part of the program. Recently, the national organization ruled that volunteers should not lead prayers before meals.

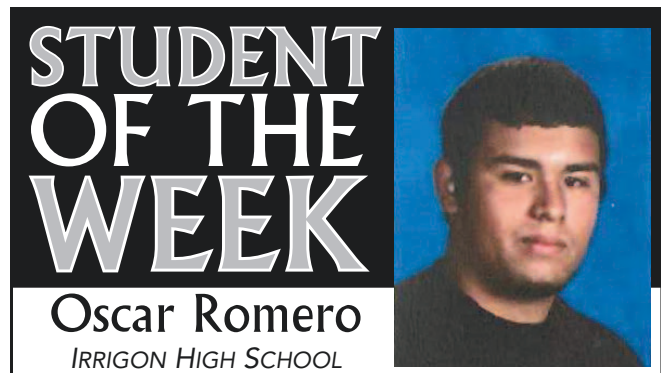
"That was a tough message to deliver,"

McMurphy said. "It made a lot of our volunteers angry."

Since the announcement, remaining RSVP employee Shirley Harrison fielded a flurry of calls from volunteers and those who use the volunteers' services.

"They were nervous about what it all means, asking, 'Now that RSVP is going away, how are we going to volunteer?'" McMurphy said. "Once things were explained, people were much better with it."

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**STUDENT OF THE WEEK**  
**Oscar Romero**  
 IRRIGON HIGH SCHOOL

Our Student of the Week is Oscar Romero. Oscar is very involved in our school community. Oscar is an honor roll student, Vice President of the Senior Class and is active in Key Club. He has also lettered in three sports including soccer and track. He is also a member of our boys basketball team, which captured the State Championship for the second year in a row. In addition, Oscar is well liked by his peers as well as the school staff. We are very proud of Oscar.

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