

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## EXPLOSION ROCKS DOWNTOWN PENDLETON

### MAN KILLED AS FORMER CITY HALL GOES UP IN FLAMES

East Oregonian

An explosion and fire Tuesday morning killed a 25-year-old man, injured others and destroyed part of Pendleton's former city hall building. Firefighters and police remained on the scene through the day though the fire was contained by 10:20 a.m.

The blast occurred at 8:10 a.m. in the century-old structure at 34 S.E. Dorion Ave. Workers in neighboring businesses reported an explosion as loud as a sonic boom.

Eduardo Quezada, 25, was on the third floor of the building when the explosion happened. Quezada died from injuries suffered in the blast.

Two others were sent to the emergency department of St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton because of smoke inhalation. Casey Severe, a Pendleton contractor, and Christian Garcia were both in "stable" condition Tuesday according to hospital spokesman Larry Blanc.

Pendleton public safety director Stuart Roberts credited firefighters with keeping the blaze from spreading to neighboring buildings.

"The fire was racing hard to the northwest corner," he said. "It was moving pretty hard and hot."

Crews will have to make sure the building is structurally safe before investigating the cause of the explosion. Roberts said police have an idea about the cause but wouldn't release it without further investigation.

The explosion and fire also knocked out power to nearby businesses. Pacific Corp. spokesman Bob Gravely said as of press time Tuesday there were nine customers without electricity. He said repairs were on hold until Pendleton fire authorities gave the company the OK to send in a crew and bucket truck.

Casey Severe said he was pulling into Sherwin Williams, 115 S.E. Emigrant Ave., when he heard the blast and saw smoke billow into the sky. Severe said he

See FIRE/8A



The old city hall building burns on the corner of southeast First Street and Dorion Avenue as firefighters from all over Umatilla County battle the blaze Tuesday in Pendleton. Staff photos by E.J. Harris



A Pendleton firefighter sprays water into a second-story window of the old Pendleton city hall after an explosion rocked the building Tuesday morning. Staff photo by Kathy Aney



Flames erupt from the roof of the old city hall. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

"At first it sounded like thunder. There was a light one, a bigger one and then a huge explosion."

— Charlene Hanson, across the street during the explosion

#### City hall history

Pendleton city government and police moved into the city hall building at 34 SE Dorion Ave. on Dec. 31, 1908. The city used the building until November 1996 when it relocated to its current location further west on Dorion Ave. and the building was sold into private hands. The building is currently owned by Jose Quezada. People were living in the building, and other parts were rented to businesses.

#### HERMISTON

### Surgical center makes room for robots

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

A steady stream of visitors got a look at Good Shepherd Medical Center's new surgery center Tuesday before the facility is sterilized and prepped for use.

"You're not going to find a more state-of-the-art facility than what we have constructed," CEO Dennis Burke said.

He said design of the center started three years ago, and architects implemented suggestions from the hospital's surgical staff to make the design more user friendly. The new center also helps the hospital conform to the latest



A member of Good Shepherd Medical Center's surgical staff shows off the hospital's new, larger surgery suite. Staff photo by Jade McDowell

industry standards and best practices.

"All of our (operating room) is being updated to the

latest and greatest," Burke said.

See SURGERY/8A

#### PENDLETON

### Fuel tax primed for November ballot

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

Months of Pendleton City Council debate over a 5-cent gas tax are over. But the ultimate fate of the future street funding will be determined by voters in November.

The council voted 6-1 to place the gas tax on the November ballot, with Councilwoman Jane Hill voting against and Councilman Tom Young absent.

While she supports the idea of a gas tax, Hill has said there is not enough time to build a successful campaign by November. As a result, Hill will not participate in the campaign.

City officials estimate the gas tax and a \$5 transportation utility fee would raise \$1.3 million to repair and maintain Pendleton's underfunded road system.

If passed, Pendleton's gas tax would match Eugene

See TAX/7A



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