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EAST OREGONIAN

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015

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PENDLETON



Rob Markwick and C.J. Flores, with O So Kleen of Hermiston, tear out water-damaged floor tiles with crowbars on Tuesday at Joe's Fiesta on Main Street in Pendleton.

After the fire, a flood

Neighbors of old city hall must deal with damage

By JONATHAN BACH
East Oregonian

Joe Meda kicks a piece of loose debris with his boot. His Main Street business, Joe's Fiesta, is across the alley from the old city hall that was wrecked by a July 21 explosion and fire.

About a million gallons of water was used to douse the flames over the course of two-and-a-half hours, causing damage to surrounding businesses, including Meda's Mexican restaurant. He walks through the space and details the damage as workers set about their tasks. A fair amount of the flooring had to be removed or came loose on its own because of flooding. Meda said the floor tiles started popping up as if they were "popcorn" because of the warping wood floor beneath them.

Meda said his contractor told him it would take four to six weeks for his business to be ready for a reopening. He said his insurance adjuster estimated the damage would cost more than \$250,000 to repair.

"Thank God I have insurance," he said.

He said he had to replace plumbing and has contractors working to remove every trace of water damage from his restaurant. He said he worries about gunpowder residue from the explosion, and wonders if it could pose a threat to family members who work around open flames in the kitchen.

"Am I over-thinking it?" he asked. "Maybe."

But Meda said he did not want to take



Martha Olvera, with O So Kleen of Hermiston, uses a toothbrush to clean smoke damage off of furniture Tuesday at Joe's Fiesta on Main Street in Pendleton.

"Thank God I have insurance."

— Joe Meda, owner of Joe's Fiesta, facing \$250,000 in repairs

chances. In addition, Meda said the sheer amount and pressure of the water from last week's firefighting caused bricks constituting a portion of his roof to shift. He said the water on his roof at one point was as deep as a jacuzzi.

Meda said he has owned the retail space for 13 years. But he said all of the damage to his restaurant pales against that of the family who lost 25-year-old Eduardo Quezada to the fire.

"Our loss compared to that of my neighbors is nothing," he said.

Nearby owners Kevin and Chris Garcia, of Out in Action Head Shop at 318 S. Main St., said the fire destroyed their air conditioning unit and there was minimal water damage on parts of the store's carpeting.

Garcia said firefighters also had to break the shop's front door to get in and shut off a gas line. Police gave him 10 minutes to find the keys to his shop so the front door could be opened, but he

See FLOOD/8A

Cop cam rules may deter use

By SEAN HART
East Oregonian

What began as an effort to require officers to use body cameras may actually deter some agencies from implementing the technology.

In a legislative compromise, a proposal to mandate that officers wear body-mounted cameras and record their entire shifts became strict regulations for agencies that already voluntarily use the cameras.

House Bill 2571 requires these agencies, including Hermiston, to set policies for officers to record the entirety of most interactions with people and retain the data for at least 180 days. The bill also exempts most of the recorded video from public records laws and requires the editing of any videos that are disclosed to render any faces unidentifiable.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said he has considered using body cameras in his department, but the new regulations make it less likely he will soon implement the technology.

The cameras and data storage are costly, Roberts said. And he is not certain the return on investment would make the endeavor worthwhile.

"I just can't afford them right now, quite frankly, and I'm just not sure about the practicality of it," he said. "I think there's still some things in (House Bill) 2571 I'm not overly comfortable with."

Roberts questioned the costs of complying with the new regulations, the application of videos in the courtroom and the political scrutiny of the relatively new technology.

Roberts said the department has used in-car cameras for 15 years, and they were never regulated by the Legislature. The new regulations specifically for body cameras are "almost a contradiction" to established standards, he said.

See CAMERAS/8A



Roberts



Edmiston

Marijuana sales to start Oct. 1

SALEM (AP) — Oregon will allow marijuana sales to adults on Oct. 1, nearly a year sooner than originally planned.

Gov. Kate Brown signed a bill Tuesday allowing existing medical marijuana dispensaries to temporarily sell the drug to all adults.

Marijuana possession became legal under state law on July 1, but state regulators are still about a year away from being ready to allow licensed recreational marijuana retail outlets to open. That means the drug currently can be grown or given away, but it can't be legally purchased for recreational use.

Supporters of early sales say it will give Oregonians a legal place to buy a drug that is legal to possess. Consumers will be allowed to purchase limited quantities of dried marijuana, seeds and plant starts, but not

See POT SALES/8A

Elderly man killed in crash

East Oregonian

A 79-year-old man died Tuesday in a single-vehicle crash on Highway 395 between Pilot Rock and Ukiah.

The crash happened at 11:16 a.m. near milepost 36 — about 20 miles south of Pilot Rock and 15 miles from Ukiah. The out of state driver, whose name has not yet been released, drove off the highway for unknown reasons. The vehicle traveled roughly 200 yards down a draw and rolled, ejecting the lone occupant who died at the scene, according to Oregon State Police.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said he was

the first officer on the scene. Roberts was in Pilot Rock to help with interviews for the city's new police chief when the call came about the crash.

Roberts said a pickup went down a steep ravine in a curvy section of the highway near Battle Mountain Forest State Park.

Members of the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue, Pendleton Fire and the Department of Forestry worked to remove the deceased driver. At this time there is no evidence that speed or intoxicants were factors in the crash.

The identity of the deceased driver will be released Wednesday after next of kin have been notified.

No toxins, just 'ramblings' in suspicious mail sent to 20 sheriffs

Associated Press

The FBI said Tuesday that no toxic substances have been found in letters sent to about 20 Oregon sheriffs or their offices.

Sheriffs around the state reported receiving the envelopes containing rambling, incoherent messages Monday. Investigators initially said some of the packages contained an unknown substance, but the FBI said Tuesday that none had a visible powder.

Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer said he opened a letter at his office in Canyon City and felt a burning sensation in his face and arms, a metallic taste in his mouth, and numbness and tingling in his lips. Palmer said he secured the letter in an evidence bag and had his wife take him to a hospital.

He was held for observation, but doctors



Palmer

didn't determine a cause for his symptoms, Palmer said. He was back at work Tuesday.

He said he couldn't decipher meaning from the letter.

"I didn't read that far into depth," Palmer told The Associated Press. "It was some scribbles and ramblings. I couldn't tell you what the context of it was."

Grant is one of Oregon's smallest counties, home to about 7,300 people in rural eastern Oregon.

Law enforcement officials were collecting the letters and taking them to the FBI or the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory, the FBI said.



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