



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The downtown area of Pendleton is inundated with a heavy haze as smoke, dust and strong winds combined prompting the Umatilla County Health Department to declare an air quality advisory.

### SMOKE: Cornet Fire has grown to 15,000 acres

Continued from 1A

spokesman, said the east-bound closure was extended from Baker City to Pendleton due to limited space and services for stranded trucks. The highway was expected to remain closed through the evening, and possibly longer depending on fire activity.

"Right now, we're planning on an extended closure," Strandberg said.

Brian Ebert, deputy fire staff for the Umatilla National Forest, said the sheer number of fires in the region is starting to spread firefighting resources thin.

"We'll adapt our strategy and suppression tactics based on the resources we receive," Ebert said.

Jerry Garrett, assistant manager at the Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch Center, said crews and equipment will be placed where they can be of the best use.

Other large fires in the region include:

- Cornet Fire — Located 16 miles south of Baker City, burning in grass, brush and timber. The blaze was started Aug. 10 by lightning and has grown to 15,000 acres. It is 10 percent contained. Level 3 evacuation notices have been posted by the Baker County Sheriff's Office for homes in Stices Gulch, Rancheria Creek, Black Mountain and Denny Creek. A Level 3 evacuation means residents should leave immediately. In addition, Gov. Kate Brown evoked the Emergency Conflagration Act Thursday, authorizing the State Fire Marshal's Office to send additional crews to help protect structures.

- Windy Ridge — Burning on land protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry and Bureau of Land Management north of the Burnt River in Baker County. Started by lightning, the fire is now 30,000 acres, 5 percent contained and spreading fast due to high, unpredictable winds.

- Eagle Complex — Located 10 miles east of Medical Springs on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. Size is 1,500 acres and includes three separate lightning-caused fires: the Tamarack, Eagle and 870 fires. A Level 2, or "get set" evacuation notice was sent Thursday to residents along Forest Road 77 near Tamarack Campground, Bennett Peak and Main Eagle. No structures have been burned, but firefighters are faced with a combination of difficult terrain, hot weather and wind.

- Eldorado Fire — Reported Friday morning, burning on 2,500 acres of combined BLM, ODF and Wallowa-Whitman National Forest lands about eight miles southeast of Unity near Eldorado Campground in Baker County. The fire closed



Photo posted to InciWeb

The Cornet Fire burns about 16 miles of Baker City, and is one of several large wildfires spreading across Baker County.

### Smoke brings reduced air quality

PENDLETON — Air quality should suffer the next several days in Pendleton and Hermiston as smoke pours in from wildfires burning across northeastern Oregon.

The Eagle Complex, Cornet and Eldorado fires, in particular, are growing fast in size and forcing evacuations in some areas. Hot weather and high winds continue to make conditions difficult for firefighters.

Pendleton is expected to get more smoke than Hermiston, according to the Umatilla County Health Department. As smoke increases, it should spread farther west causing widespread haze.

Currently, air quality levels are at moderate risk levels in the area.

"Smoke conditions can change rapidly depending on wind speed and direction, so it is important for people to monitor air quality levels throughout the day," said Meghan DeBolt, health department director. "Wildfire smoke may increase the risk of illness especially for older adults, young children and people with asthma, respiratory or heart conditions."

DeBolt said people should limit their outdoor activities when air quality levels are moderate to unhealthy. Residents should also reduce sources of indoor air pollution such as burning cigarettes and candles, using gas, propane or wood burning stoves and furnaces, and vacuuming.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality posts its air quality index online at [www.deq.state.or.us/aqi/index.aspx](http://www.deq.state.or.us/aqi/index.aspx).

a stretch of Highway 26 between Unity and Ironside. The cause has not yet been determined.

The American Red Cross has opened a shelter at the Baker City Middle School with 100 beds available for evacuees. As of Friday afternoon, 125 homes were under Level 3 evacuation, 36 homes under Level 2 evacuation and seven homes under Level 1 evacuation.

The National Fire Preparedness Level is at 5, its highest possible rating,

following months of drought. Forest fuels are ripe to burn, and Garrett said he expects to pick up additional hold-over fires from the previous week's lightning.

More information about local wildfires is posted online at [www.bluemountainfireinfo.blogspot.com](http://www.bluemountainfireinfo.blogspot.com). For updates on travel information, visit [www.tripcheck.com](http://www.tripcheck.com).

Contact George Plaven at [gplaven@eastoregonian.com](mailto:gplaven@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0825.

### GUNS: Local Bi-Mart's, Wal-Mart's not offering the background checks for private transactions

Continued from 1A

the law.

"We will handle such cases as we do any other," Roberts stated, "...the solvability factors will dictate priority and allocation of time/resource."

Time and resource allocation also is a concern for Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan.

"First of all, with limited resources, we're going to be dealing with higher priority stuff before we're even looking at this," he said.

And while he said he gets the intent of the law, bad guys will find ways to get guns, from stealing them to buying on the black market.

"I think the only thing is," he said, "it will make it more difficult for law-abiding citizens to transfer weapons."

Rowan said lawmakers may need to revise SB 941 so it is specific to buying and selling guns. He said the language of transferring is too vague, and law-abiding citizens who would, for example, loan a gun to a friend during a hunting trip now could face criminal charges.

"That doesn't make much sense to me," Rowan said.

Still, Rowan said he was not going as far as other Oregon sheriffs who stated they would not enforce the law. His oath of office requires he enforce the laws of the land, he said, even though this state law seems to conflict with the right to bear arms in the U.S. Constitution.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said if state police send his department any referrals, he is likely to send it right back.

Edmiston explained Hermiston police for a decade used the Oregon State Police Law Enforcement Data Systems to conduct criminal background checks for businesses in town that sell firearms. But state police last year notified Hermiston it was out of line for using the system to go on "fishing expeditions" for offenders, Edmiston said, so he ended the practice, although it also inhibits Hermiston police from providing solid investigations to the district attorney.

"I personally think it is ridiculous to, in essence, to handcuff local law enforcement from knowing what is going on in their community," Edmiston stated.

Still, the new law may not mean much more work

or worry for local cops. Checks with Bi-Mart's and Wal-Mart's in Pendleton and Hermiston revealed their sports counters are not even offering the background checks for private transactions. That's also the same for Elite Guns & Bows nor Garner's Sporting Goods, both in Pendleton.

Elite's owner Jeff Bradbury said there is no money in offering the checks, and all the paperwork and tracking of a private gun transaction would be too time-consuming.

"It's quite a process," he said. "You have to be really careful with what you log."

Rick Hadden, owner and operator of Garner's for 39 years, also said he sees too many complications and possible pitfalls to offer the service. Both business owners also said no one has asked them to do the checks.

Two businesses confirmed they offered the checks — Elite Guns & Bows, Hermiston, and Ranch & Home, Milton-Freewater — but they did not report any customers asked for the checks.

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### CAMEL: Izzy was on an episode of 'Z Nation'

Continued from 1A

Izzy is now a firmly entrenched attraction, and a lucrative one at that.

Although she couldn't say how much money Izzy generated in a year, Richards said it's enough to feed the other donkeys and horses the Richards family keeps at their ranch.

While Izzy indirectly pays for their meals, Richards said Izzy's gentle nature causes his ranch mates to bully him.

"He's pretty low on the totem pole," she said.

Already a hit on the live circuit, Izzy is making his small screen debut on an October episode of the SyFy television series "Z

Nation."

After representatives from the post-apocalyptic zombie drama requested Izzy, the camel traveled to Spokane, Wash. for a 12-hour shoot while covered in fake blood.

Richards said "Z Nation" producers have left the door open for Izzy to return to the series and is open to more TV opportunities.

Another booth that stood out among the swaths of vendors was a hot-pink canopy emblazoned with the words "Damsels in Defense."

That's the name of the Boise-based direct sales company Karen Johnson of Kenwick works for.

Like other direct sales

companies Tupperware and Mary Kay, Damsels in Defense representatives host parties where they sell their wares.

Unlike those companies, Damsels in Defense mainly sells products that women can use to ward off attacks.

In her booth at Muddy Frogwater, Johnson showed off her array of stun guns, pepper sprays and striking tools.

Johnson said Damsels has a national reach and a strong local presence, with representative teams based in Walla Walla and Pendleton.

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