

# Elder abuse investigations rise, fewer allegations substantiated

By SEAN HART  
East Oregonian

Investigations of elder abuse are increasing as the population of senior citizens continues to rise, but substantiated allegations have gone down locally.

From 2012 to 2014, the number of investigations of abuse and exploitation of older adults and people with physical disabilities increased statewide from 12,538 to 16,045, and the substantiated allegations increased from 3,229 to 4,181, according to annual reports from the Oregon Office of Adult Abuse Prevention and Investigations.

In Umatilla and Morrow counties over the same period, investigations increased from 271 to 395, but the number of substantiated allegations decreased from 69 to 62.

Dave Brehaut, Umatilla and Morrow county district manager of the state Aging and People with Disabilities agency, said the increase in investigations was likely

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Umatilla and Morrow county district manager of the state Aging and People with Disabilities agency

due to outreach that encourages more people to report possible abuse, as well as an increase in the elderly population.

“We’re hoping that it’s because more people are reporting abuse, not just more abuse is occurring,” he said. “We would rather have somebody call with something that is not abuse than not call at all.”

Brehaut said the local agency received about 342 calls reporting possible abuse in 2009. That number is projected to be 875 this year. After the calls are screened, he said, about 60 percent warrant an investigation.

As members of the Baby Boomer generation

become senior citizens, he said he expected the number of investigations to continue to rise. From 2010 to 2014, the percentage of Umatilla County residents 65 and older increased from 12.7 percent to 14.1 percent, according to U.S. census data, while the statewide percentage increased from 13.9 percent to 16 percent.

“Locally, our aging population is on par with nationwide (trends),” he said. “By 2020, about 20 percent of the population is supposed to be 65 years and older. I think the growth in our calls is going to continue.”

Financial exploitation was the most common abuse

allegation substantiated at the state level, and Brehaut said it is also one of the least reported. He said, based on national estimates, only one in six of all abuse cases are reported. Further, he said, many of the perpetrators are family members of the victim.

“I just hope that people will take the time to report if they see something or if they’re suspicious about a vulnerable adult possibly being abused,” he said. “It’s our goal in DHS and APD to protect these individuals. If we don’t hear about it, we can’t protect them.”

To report abuse to the Pendleton APD office, call 541-278-4161. For the Hermiston office, which also covers Morrow County, call 541-567-2274. To report any type of abuse or neglect of adults or children, call the Oregon Department of Human Services toll-free SAFE line, 1-855-503-SAFE (7233).

Contact Sean Hart at [smhart@eastoregonian.com](mailto:smhart@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4534.

## HERMISTON

# Electric co-op lands \$43M federal loan

Money to go toward system upgrades

By GEORGE PLAVEN  
East Oregonian

**“Our demand for energy is increasing across every customer class.”**

— Steve Eldrige,  
UEC manager

The Umatilla Electric Cooperative plans to use a \$43 million federal loan to rebuild aging power lines and substations, some of which are now more than 40 years old.

UEC was one of 77 utilities and co-ops in 31 states to receive funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development Electric Program, which has awarded \$34 billion in low interest loans since 2009.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack made the announcement Thursday, saying the program helps provide reliable and affordable electricity to rural customers.

Steve Meyers, UEC spokesman, said the loan will pay for system improvements in 2016 and 2017. It is the co-op’s primary source of funding long-range construction projects.

“UEC is in its most intensive period of building and upgrading since the 1970s,” Meyers said. “This loan reflects that.”

In recent years, UEC has rebuilt six miles of power lines on Weston Mountain and completely rebuilt its Coyote Springs Substation east of Boardman. The Juniper Canyon Substation was also refurbished in 2014.

Meyers said there is still work to be done around Hermiston and Irrigon. Meanwhile, the co-op

recently broke ground on its 30th substation, named Tumbleweed, at the Port of Morrow. It also plans to build a 1-megawatt solar array east of Umatilla.

Much of UEC’s existing infrastructure was built in the mid-1970s with the rapid expansion of irrigated agriculture in north-east Oregon. The co-op built eight substations just in 1974.

Though the equipment is built to last, it does eventually wear out. In a recent column, UEC manager Steve Eldrige said upgrading equipment now will leave customers better off than dealing with the consequences of an outdated system.

“Our demand for energy is increasing across every customer class,” Eldrige said. “We’re building for 20-30 years into the future, a careful, planned series of investments to retain the reliability our members deserve and expect.”

UEC serves roughly 10,000 customers in Umatilla and Morrow counties, and operates 2,200 miles of power lines. Demand typically peaks around 250 megawatts during the summertime irrigation season.

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## HERMISTON

# EOTEC to share plans with city council

Pot regulations, public art also on agenda

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

Marijuana, public art and the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center are all on the agenda for the Hermiston City Council on Monday.

The council’s regular meeting will be preceded by a joint work session between the council and the EOTEC authority board to discuss the progress of the EOTEC project and plans for completion.

A bus will leave from city

hall at 5:30 p.m. for a tour of the EOTEC site first, and members of the public are welcome to ride along.

In September the EOTEC board acknowledged being at least \$2.3 million short of what was needed to complete the project and recommended the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo postpone moving to the new fair and rodeo grounds until 2017.

Authority board member Dan Dorran told stakeholders there was a “very aggressive” plan in place for raising the extra \$2.3 million before 2017. That plan has not been made public, but at the Sept. 28

city council meeting Mayor David Drotzmann expressed a desire for a meeting to discuss with the EOTEC authority the possibility of the city contributing additional money to the project.

After the work session the council will convene at 7 p.m. at city hall for its regular business meeting, where it will hold a public hearing on an amendment to the zoning ordinance banning all commercial marijuana activity in the city.

The ordinance before the council on Monday would refer the decision on marijuana to voters in the November 2016 election,

instead of being decided directly by the council.

On Monday the council will also discuss developing a public art plan for Hermiston.

According to a memo from city staff, an application for an Arts Build Communities grant has already been sent to the state, with a plan for the state to contribute \$4,500 and the city to match that amount for soliciting public feedback and developing a plan to install more public art around Hermiston.

Contact Jade McDowell at [jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4536.

## BRIEFLY

### Traffic delineators to be placed at 395 and Elm on Monday

HERMISTON — The Oregon Department of Transportation will install traffic delineators at the intersection of Highway 395 and Elm Avenue in Hermiston on Monday, after the project was delayed from an earlier start date of Oct. 14.

The delineators — flexible posts that will be replaced by permanent cement barriers next year — will restrict cars from turning left onto Highway 395 from nearby driveways, including McDonald’s and Starbucks.

According to an ODOT press release, the change is designed to improve safety after a steady rise in rear-end crashes at the intersection.

The installation work is expected “minimal disruptions” to traffic during the day on Monday.

### WW.Friends connects widows, widowers

PENDLETON — All area widows and widowers are invited to a WW.Friends event.

The gathering features a baked potato bar dinner. It is Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. at 3008 N.E. Riverside Ave., Pendleton.

The group meets monthly for friendship and to share positive experiences. For more information, call 541-276-2790 or 541-276-3303.

Briefs are compiled from staff and wire reports, and press releases. Email press releases to [news@eastoregonian.com](mailto:news@eastoregonian.com)



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