

Evacuation levels lowered on Weigh Station Fire

Forests implement restrictions for campfires, smoking and off-road travel

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
East Oregonian

Evacuation levels were lowered for homes impacted by the Weigh Station Fire east of Pendleton.

A Level 1 notice means residents should be ready for a potential evacuation if fire conditions worsen. A red flag warning was in effect through 8 p.m. Tuesday for the Lower Columbia Basin, with gusty winds and low humidity across the region. Firefighters now estimate the Weigh Station Fire, which started Saturday, at 688 acres and 35 percent contained. The cause is still unknown.

“(Tuesday’s) critical fire weather will test control lines,” Joseph Goebel with the Oregon Department of Forestry said midday. “If lines hold, there will be an increase in the fire containment.”

Two outbuildings were destroyed in the blaze on Emigrant Hill between Pendleton and Meacham, though no permanent residences were lost. Emigrant Springs State Park reopened to campers and travelers Tuesday, though the public is asked to remain cautious in the area.

Beginning Wednesday, the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman national forests will implement Phase A public use restrictions for campfires, smoking, off-road travel and chainsaw use. Similar regulated use closures have already been enforced within the ODF Northeast Oregon District to lessen the risk of human-caused wildfires.

Under these restrictions, chainsaws can only be operated between the hours of 8 p.m. and 1 p.m. Saw operators must have an ax, shove, and minimum 8-ounce fire extinguisher on hand while working. A one-hour fire watch is also required after sawing is complete.

Smoking is allowed only in enclosed vehicles, buildings or cleared areas, and off-road vehicle travel is prohibited through tall grass or other fuels that can catch fire. Seasonal campfire restrictions remain in effect through Oct. 31.

Other active fires in the Northwest include:

• **Range 12 Fire** — The Range 12 Fire has torched 175,000 acres and is threatening 250 homes in southeast Washington, near Hanford and Sunnyside. The blaze started Saturday on the Yakima Training Center and has since spread into Benton and Grant counties. It is 10 percent contained, while more than 400 firefighters work to keep the flames away from the Hanford nuclear reservation and Benton City. No cause has been determined.

• **Rail Fire** — The Rail Fire erupted Sunday, and has spread over 2,000 acres in a remote area near Unity in Baker County. The cause has not been determined. There are 282 firefighters battling the blaze, and no private property or ranches are currently at risk.

For more information on fires in the area, visit www.bluemountainfire-info.blogspot.com. To report a fire, call the Blue Mountain Intergovernmental Dispatch at (541)963-7171 or dial 9-1-1.

Contact *George Plaven* at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

STANFIELD



Staff photo by Alexa Lougee

A field fire burned Tuesday afternoon in Stanfield Meadows, north of Interstate 84.

Despite wind, crews quickly contain field fire

East Oregonian

Fire crews from around the area worked to contain a field fire in Stanfield Meadows that was reported late Tuesday morning. The fire burned seven acres of heavy brush.

Winds pushed past 20 mph, but ditches on two sides of the fire and quick response by responders aided in containing the blaze.

Bane Billalobos lives and farms next door to where the fire started. His wife, Rhonda, called 9-1-1 when they saw smoke. He was impressed with the quick response of

the fire crews and attributes it to the containment of the fire, noting with the winds the fire could have easily grown out of control.

Five engines and three water tenders from the Umatilla County Fire District and the Echo Fire District assisted in the fire-fighting efforts. Due to the winds, crews are expected to remain on scene for quite some time mopping up and watching for flare-ups.

The National Weather Service has issued a red flag warning for Tuesday because of windy and dry conditions.

STANFIELD

Victim of house fire identified

East Oregonian

The man killed in Monday’s house fire in Stanfield has been identified as Eldon Hawley, 59.

Hawley died after his older model double-wide manufactured home became engulfed in flame. The fire has been ruled accidental.

Fire Marshal Tom Bohm indicated the fire started on the porch and had two

potential causes. The fire could have been related to smoking or to an electrical short. Hawley had an electric scooter plugged in with an extension cord near the porch area.

A total of eight firefighters and a chief officer from the Umatilla County Fire District 1 worked to extinguish the fire, but were limited to the exterior due to the amount of fire and the roof structures failing.

HERMISTON

Ice cream brings neighbors, police together for National Night Out

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Few things bring people together like ice cream, which might explain why the conversation was flowing easily Tuesday night at Hermiston’s National Night Out block party.

Neighbors from the Banker Drive area mingled with first responders and police, bowls of ice cream in hand, after Dorothy Smith won the ice cream social by working out the clues in the newspaper to find a golden medallion hidden by Hermiston Police Officer Erica Sandoval.

The annual event, which is celebrated throughout the country, encourages safer neighborhoods by helping people get to know those living near them and interact with police, firefighters and EMTs in a non-emergency situation.

“We had one back in the day, but we haven’t had one for a while,” Alleen Lind said of Tuesday’s block party.

She has lived in the neighborhood for about 10 years now, and said she is glad that neighbors have been willing to mingle with each other instead of keeping to themselves.

“If you know them, you know what they’re doing, and so you’re more liable to notice if something is wrong,” she said.

Sylvia Smith also said she feels safer the more neighbors she gets to know — including a few newer faces she saw on Tuesday who haven’t lived



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Dorothy Smith, winner of this year’s National Night Out medallion hunt, speaks with Mayor David Drotzmann and city councilors Jackie Myers and Doug Primmer as they serve ice cream at the block party Smith won for her neighborhood.

on the block for long. She said it could come in handy to warn people if there had been problems with crime, and if there is ever some sort of natural disaster they would know who to check on or how many people might have been home.

“This is a good idea to get people out,” she said.

Mixed in with neighbors were police officers and other

first responders from Hermiston Police Department and Umatilla County Fire District 1.

When asked if he had gotten to know any police officers before the National Night Out event, neighbor Pavel Tverdokhlebenko joked, “Just once, when I was going too fast.”

He was at the social with his wife Valeria Tverdokh-

“This is great, I think, to get to know people, neighbors, because our life is so busy, we just go to work and home and we don’t get to see people a lot.”

– Pavel Tverdokhlebenko, Banker Drive area resident

lebenko and their toddler son David, whom neighbors seemed to know by name already as they tried to coax him out of his mother’s arms.

The family immigrated to the United States from Ukraine in 2003, and moved onto Banker Drive a little over a year ago.

Pavel said he was enjoying the chance to socialize with so many people and he hoped the neighborhood would do more block parties in the future.

“This is great, I think, to get to know people, neighbors, because our life is so busy, we just go to work and home and we don’t get to see people a lot,” he said.

To free up first responders to mingle with the group, the ice cream was served by Mayor David Drotzmann — who happens to live in the neighborhood himself — and city councilors Jackie Myers and Doug Primmer.

Contact *Jade McDowell* at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

BRIEFLY

Motorcyclist dies Sunday in wreck near Hat Rock

A man hurt in a single-vehicle motorcycle wreck on Highway 730 east of Sand Station died Sunday afternoon while being transported by air to the hospital.

Umatilla Fire Chief Steve Potts said the man was traveling westbound on the highway when he crashed over a guardrail and down an embankment.

Potts said the cause of the crash was unknown.

The victim’s name has not been released.

West Nile found in Irrigon mosquitoes

IRRIGON — West Nile virus has turned up in mosquito samples collected last week near Irrigon, according to the North Morrow Vector Control District. Another six positive samples have already turned up in Umatilla County near Hermiston, Stanfield and Umatilla.

Health officials in Morrow County are advising residents to take precautions against mosquitoes in order to avoid the risk of infection. Tips include eliminating standing water where mosquitoes can breed, using insect repellent and wearing long-sleeve shirts and pants when working in mosquito-infested areas.

While the majority of people infected with West Nile exhibit show no signs of the disease, about 20 percent do develop mild flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache and nausea. In rare cases, West Nile can lead to encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain. Those at higher risk include people 50 years or older, people with weak immune systems or people with diabetes and high blood pressure.

Anyone experiencing



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Fair is in fashion

Kendall Cooper, 13, of Stanfield talks about her dress with judges Courtney Waliser of Walla Walla and Harriet Kyles of Athena on Wednesday at the 4-H Fashion Review Contest in Pendleton. The show is the first contest in the Umatilla County Fair, which officially kicks off next week.

symptoms such as severe headache, stiff neck, mental confusion, muscle weakness, shaking or paralysis should contact their doctor. For more information, contact Shelley Wight with the Morrow County Health District at 541-676-5421.

BJ the DJ to spin Carpenters’ hits

MILTON-FREEWATER — The brother-sister duo of the Carpenters released such hits as “Close to You,” “Top of the World,” “Please Mr. Postman” and “We’ve Only Just Begun.”

The music of Karen and Richard Carpenter is featured during Oldies Night in Milton-Freewater. The free event is Saturday at 7 p.m. at Wesley United Methodist Church, 816 S. Main St., Milton-Freewater. BJ the DJ will spin dozens of Carpenters songs, original versions of some of their hit remakes and share loads of trivia about them and their career. Also, The Frogs will provide snacks.

For more information, contact Jones at 541-938-7028 or dubuquer@charter.net.

Basic Rights Oregon celebrates 20 years

PENDLETON — A celebration of the 20th anniversary of Basic Rights Oregon is planned in Pendleton.

Basic Rights Oregon is in the second year of a five-year strategic plan focused on lifting up LGBTQ Oregonians in small towns and rural communities, transgender people, LGBTQ

people of color and LGBTQ youth. People are invited to connect with supporters in the Pendleton area and receive an update from Amy Herzfeld, co-executive director.

The Pendleton Garden Party is Sunday from 5-7 p.m. at Pendleton House B&B, 311 N. Main St., Pendleton. Although the event is free, registration is required.

For more information, contact 503-222-6151, info@basicrights.org or visit www.basicrights.org/events, which includes a link to RSVP.

Stanfield cancels August breakfast

STANFIELD — The regular Saturday breakfast at the Stanfield Community Center has been canceled for August.

The kitchen is undergoing renovations. The next community breakfast is Saturday, Sept. 10 from 7-10 a.m. at 225 W. Roosevelt Ave., Stanfield.

For more information, call 541-449-1332 or 541-571-6019.

Briefs are compiled from staff and wire reports, and press releases. Email press_releases@eastoregonian.com

It’s Your Choice

No one can make you believe. The choice is yours and yours alone. Your parents can’t decide for you, nor can your closest friends. A church leader or an evangelist is powerless to coerce a decision that must come from deep within your heart.

Belief in Jesus is more than just mentally acknowledging the truth that He is the Savior, the Son of God who was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died as a sacrifice for our sins, and rose triumphantly from the grave. Belief involves entrusting our souls and lives to Jesus Christ. That happens when we accept God’s free gift of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). To receive it, we must admit our sinfulness and tell Him we need and want His forgiveness and the new spiritual life He offers.

Take the step of faith -- a step based on good reason -- and tell God that you believe in His Son. Tell Him that you want the salvation He offers, and that you now acknowledge Him as Savior and Lord.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- Jesus (John 14:6)

If you want to know more about the person named Jesus, find a Bible and read one of the New Testament gospel accounts of His life (such as the gospel of John). See for yourself what it says about Him -- what people thought of Him, who He claimed to be, what He did on earth, and what He can do for you.

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