

CARNIVAL: Rides were not running Wednesday due to clerical issues

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and other apparatus and notify ride supervisors of any concerns. If an issue is found, the ride is shut down until it can be fixed.

There are approximately 2,500 injuries relating to carnival rides in the U.S. each year, according to a 2006 report from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. From 1987 to 2002 the country saw 13 carnival ride-related deaths compared to 46 deaths relating to fixed rides at theme parks.

Davis Amusements always sends at least one representative to the Northwest Showmen's Club safety seminar — a week-long safety conference in Portland specifically for carnival operators.

Fire Marshal Tom Bohm keeps safety at the forefront during fair week. Bohm can be seen mingling among the booths checking for inadequate extension cords, up-to-date hood ventilation and fire extinguishers. Bohm was at the Davis Carnival Wednesday afternoon, checking to make sure each ride had a fire extinguisher on hand.



Patrons ride the Yoyo at the Umatilla County Fair on Thursday in Hermiston. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Many rides weren't operating Wednesday, but the reasons were not safety-related. According to Davis and Umatilla Fair Board Chairman Lucas Wagner, the issues were clerical. Davis had subcontracted with Paradise Amusements to bring in additional rides for fair week.

However, Paradise Amusements had not received an approved Oregon

state operating permit, a fact Davis was unaware of until the State of Oregon Building Division notified her Wednesday morning that the paperwork had not been finalized. Davis is aware there were many frustrated families and has offered to provide new carnival bracelets to patrons who bring Wednesday's bracelet to the carnival office.

"We want to make it

right with our community friends," Davis said.

Davis Amusement brought in new rides overnight to replace the rides not permitted in Oregon. Once the new rides arrived there was a delay waiting for the non-permitted rides to be disassembled and removed from the space. However, all rides should be up and running for Friday and Saturday.

AIRPORT: Boutique's planes are faster, quieter

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could offer the airport and its customers.

The San Francisco-based Boutique is relatively new to the scene, winning their first EAS contract in 2014.

Despite a short track record, Boutique now operates routes in 12 states across the country, including flights out of 13 EAS communities.

CEO Shawn Simpson and Director of Operations Mathew Butcher attributed Boutique's steep rise to its customer service and reliability.

"It's not even rocket science," Simpson said. "We just do what we're supposed to do."

Among many of the airports where Boutique takes over from another airline, Simpson said the company doubles or triples boardings. Some of those airports are located in cities that SeaPort used to cover, including Greenville, Mississippi and Muscle Shoals, Alabama.

More boardings makes it easier for EAS airports to stay under the federally mandated \$200 per passenger subsidy cap. Reaching 10,000 boardings in a year triggers an automatic \$1 million from the DOT.

The pair also touted the planes they would use in Pendleton — Pilatus PC-12 — would offer a superior experience to the fleet of Cessna Caravans SeaPort uses.

The Pilatus planes fly faster, generally taking about 45 minutes to get from Pendleton to Portland, and have pressurized cabins, meaning the rides are smoother and quieter.

Boutique reliability percentage is usually in the high 90s, weather cancellations excluded, and Butcher said they've never had a safety incident.

Although Boutique is willing to spend \$20,000 annually on marketing, Simpson said word-of-mouth about the improved service has usually served as the company's best tool

"This is a convenience sell in a lot of ways. The folks that use this don't have a food stamp card."

— Steve Chrisman, Pendleton Airport manager, on Pendleton customers that might be willing to pay more

for attracting more passengers.

SeaPort staff gave their presentation next, where they told the commission how Pendleton would play a major role in the company's new Northwest focus.

SeaPort President Tim Sieber went over the various setbacks the airline has faced in 2016 — filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, having Pendleton's EAS subsidy tentatively stripped because it couldn't stay under the per passenger subsidy cap and the Federal Aviation Administration's proposed \$500,000 civil penalty for flying planes that weren't airworthy.

Sieber said SeaPort has addressed or is in the process of addressing these issues and is ready to commit \$25,000 per year for marketing.

SeaPort highlighted its ongoing efforts, including donations to community groups, Round-Up saddle sponsorship and the "Fly In, Cash Out" promotion with Wildhorse Resort and Casino.

After a rough part of the year, SeaPort's reliability numbers have rebounded and Sieber said the company has now gone more than 100 days without a cancellation unrelated to weather.

When asked about SeaPort's safety track record, Director of Operations Nolan McDermott said SeaPort has had safety violations in the past but they have been addressed.

McDermott said SeaPort could also use recent federal legislation to bring the Transportation Security Administration back to town, although Pendleton Airport Manager Steve Chrisman said he'd rather focus on increasing boardings than slow down passengers as they go through security.

declared bankruptcy.

"I'm wondering how fragile this network is," he said.

After the presentations ended, the commission and city staff weighed in on the competing headlines.

Chrisman noted how well SeaPort has improved significantly since Sieber took over amidst the bankruptcy, but he also said Pendleton customers might be willing to pay more for a faster, smoother flight.

"This is a convenience sell in a lot of ways," Chrisman said. "The folks that use this don't have a food stamp card."

The commissioners told Chrisman to verify Boutique's performance with airport managers in its other markets before they reconvene for a recommendation.

The city council will have the final say on the bid recommendation to the DOT.

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EOTEC: Fair would like to have more space for camping

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down because of the inconvenience to neighbors, there is no denying the impact on the neighborhood. Traffic increases dramatically, late-night noise and floodlights interrupt their children's sleeping patterns and people sometimes decide to park in front of their driveway or take smoke breaks on their lawn.

"We don't look forward to fair week," Jillian said.

Other neighbors echoed those sentiments and said they will be happy to see the fair and rodeo move to a much less densely populated area.

Volunteers are another group looking forward to the move out of town. Wanda Alanis, who was keeping an eye on the exhibits in Price Hall on Thursday, said she is excited at the idea of an air-conditioned, enclosed space for exhibits.

"We try to keep things as clean as possible, but some years when it's windy it gets nasty," she said.

She and Kris Dorran, superintendent for the canned foods exhibits, said they're lucky if dust is all that blows in on the quilts and food. Some years rainstorms have flooded the hall as well. And Dorran said the lack of air conditioning means the award-winning baked goods on display are often covered in mold by the end of the week.

They already know the new event center, which will house all exhibits during the fair, will take care of those problems. After spending years climbing ladders to hang quilts from the ceiling, they are hoping the new arrangement also includes a safer, more convenient way to display them.

Dorran said it will also be nice just to have a new space that isn't falling apart.

"There is a shelf we are not using for canned food this year because we are questioning the integrity of it," she said.

For kids showing animals through 4-H and FFA, the new fairgrounds will include new barns with more room. Kenny Nichols, whose daughter is showing a hog at the fair this year, said he hopes that the camping situation will be better as well.

His family lives outside of Hermiston and he and his wife have jobs to get to, so it's a huge help for them to be able to be able to camp on the fairgrounds. That allows his daughter to wake up and walk over to her 5 a.m. feeding

and pen-cleaning duties. However, this year the family was originally told that even though they had applied for a spot and paid the fee before deadline, there were not enough spots for everyone and they would not be able to camp there. A couple of days before the fair, he said, they were contacted and told that a spot had been found for them after all.

Nichols said it would be nice to have more room, since RVs and tents are currently spaced about five feet apart from each other. And while water and sewer hookups are not essential, they would come in handy.

"The main thing would be more camping spots," he said.

Those attending the fair just for fun have a few upgrades they're looking for EOTEC to provide as well. Tasha Bleyenbergh said she is looking forward to more handicapped-accessible restrooms, particularly a family restroom in the exhibit hall.

She had a bad experience in a previous year at the fair with restrooms. She said her autistic son, who was the same size as her at the time, was having stomach problems when they were confronted with a massive line at the regular restrooms. They were forced to use a portable toilet, and Bleyenbergh said trying to cram both of them into the space for several minutes as she tried to help him clean up in 100 degree heat was a miserable experience.

"It kind of deterred me from trying to take my son to the fair," she said, noting that she knew of other families who were also hesitant to take disabled or special-needs family members because of the restroom issue.

Slone said the new fair and rodeo grounds at EOTEC will be up to code when it comes to accessibility, including ADA restrooms and a large number of handicapped-accessible parking spots near the event center and at the rodeo grounds.

He said the extra space at the new fairgrounds will mean more room and the opportunity to find the best layout for vendors, food stalls, carnival rides and other components.

"If we don't like the layout the first year we can change the layout for the second year," he said. "We don't have to put it back the same way."

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

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