

OREGON WILDFIRES

Campgrounds near Paisley evacuated

PORTLAND (AP) — Oregon's wildfire season is picking up just as much of the state endures a stretch of triple-digit heat.

A fire west of Sunriver led officials to warn people in a subdivision they might have to evacuate. In south-central Oregon, campers Thursday were ordered to leave campgrounds along the Chewaucan River because of a wildfire burning near Paisley in the Fremont-Winema National Forest. Some homes in that sparsely populated area also fell under the evacuation alert.

In Eastern Oregon, crews set intentional blazes to rob the Rail fire of fuel as it burns about 10 miles southwest of Unity. The wildfire that has scorched 37 square miles produced a large column of smoke that could be seen from Baker City and Pendleton.

Firefighters in the coming days won't have comfortable conditions to battle the flames. The forecast calls for temperatures near or above 100 in Western Oregon and it'll be in the 90s east of the Cascades. The fire near Sunriver was relatively small, less than a square mile, but its location near the resort community got attention. Crews worked through



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin via AP

In this Wednesday photo, a group of bikers ride along a path near the Deschutes River near the Sunriver airport to get a better view of a wildfire burning west of Sunriver, in Bend. Oregon's wildfire season is picking up just as much of the state endures a stretch of triple-digit heat.

the night and continued to focus on the southeast corner, the direction the fire had been moving and an area with homes, said Patrick Lair, spokesman for Central Oregon Interagency Dispatch Center. Crews got a line around the fire at about 2:30 a.m. Thursday and did back-burning through the night.

The fire northwest of Paisley spread to more than 3 square miles. It started Wednesday afternoon and grew fast because of gusty winds, high temperatures and low humidity.

The town of Paisley, population about 250, remains under a low-level warning, with people asked to make

preparations in case an evacuation becomes necessary. The situation is a little more serious for seven homes on Mill Street, where residents were warned to be ready to evacuate.

Three other fires in Lake County, which borders California and Nevada, were small and posed no threat.

DRONES: Professional-grade units cost thousands

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using as an opportunity to find the software they need to compile agricultural data.

Curt Thompson, the career technical education coordinator for the Pendleton School District, said he plans to incorporate some of the ideas from Yamhill-Carlton's program into Pendleton High School's UAS classes, which will start in December when the Pendleton Tech and Trade center opens.

Although many in the agricultural industry see drones as a part of the future of farming, some don't know how quickly it will be integrated.

Todd Thorne, a member of the Pendleton Airport Commission and a former wheat farmer, said he could definitely see drones being used now to help growers of high-value crops like potatoes and tree fruits. But the current cost of investing in a UAS might be too cost prohibitive for a lower-value crop like dryland wheat.

While a quadcopter drone can now be bought for well under \$100, the price tag for many of the professional-grade drones being demonstrated cost were in the thousands.

Don Wysocki, a soil scientist with the Umatilla County Oregon State University Extension Service, concurred with Thorne. He said he saw drone operators leasing out UAS services to farmers rather than growers buying drones of their own.

The Ag Drone Rodeo wasn't the first series of demonstrations for farmers.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Wes Alexander, flight ops lead for INSITU Commercial, makes an adjustment on a 3DR Solo drone before a demonstration at the Ag Drone Rodeo on Thursday east of Stanfield.

Phil Hamm, the station director of OSU's Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center, said his organization hosted some UAS demonstrations at the HAREC field days a few years ago.

Hamm said there's a great deal of potential for farmers.

For instance, Hamm said UAS can better pinpoint the spots where pests are destroying a crop, allowing the farmer to target that spot rather than blanket a large area with expensive, unnecessary pesticide.

With many growers not having

enough time to learn and operate drones themselves, Hamm also thought leasing drone services would probably be the most immediate way UAVs would be integrated into farming.

While he did note that farmers in the Columbia Basin are progressive in their ability to adapt to new technologies, Hamm said drone companies will have to appeal to growers' business sense.

"You have to prove to them that they can save money," he said.

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Forest officials tighten public use restrictions to prevent fires

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
East Oregonian

Officials on the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman national forests will implement Phase B public use restrictions beginning Friday to limit the potential for human-caused fires.

The increased restrictions come on the heels of increased fire danger, and pertain to campfires, smoking, chainsaws, internal combustion engines and generators.

"We all enjoy and appreciate our forests, and we need to minimize the chance of an accidental human-caused fire," said Brian Goff, fire staff officer on the Umatilla National Forest. "It's mid-August, and there's still several weeks of fire season ahead of us."

Phase B restrictions mean campfires are allowed only in designated campgrounds and recreation sites. Operating an internal combustion engine, such as a chainsaw, is also prohibited.

Generators are allowed, but only in the center of an area at least 10 feet in diameter that has been cleared of all flammable material, or fully contained within the bed of a pickup truck. Smoking is allowed only in enclosed vehicles, buildings, developed recreation sites or when stopped in areas cleared of burnable debris.

Driving off-road is prohibited, except to reach a campsite that's located within 300 feet of an open road.

"We all need to be aware of these conditions, be cautious when recreating in the forest and think about fire prevention," Goff said.

Similar restrictions, known as regulated use closures, will also be tightened on lands protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry's Northeast Oregon District.

"These restrictions are put in place to help minimize private landowners' exposure to human-caused fires," said Joe Hessel, La Grande unit forester. "While landowners and the public must abide by these prevention measures, landowners can impose more stringent restrictions on their own land."

Burning debris of any kind, including the use of burn barrels, will be prohibited on the ODF land

within the district. Open fires will also be prohibited except at designated locations and Oregon State Parks.

Landowners can only use chainsaws with a valid industrial permit, and cannot cut, grind or weld metal unless specifically allowed by the state forester. Mowing of dried grass with power-driven equipment is not allowed, and ATVs are prohibited except on improved roads or to harvest agricultural crops.

The ODF Northeast Oregon District covers approximately 2 million acres across Umatilla, Union, Baker and Wallowa counties, as well as small portions of Morrow, Grant and Malheur counties. So far, the district has seen 20 human-caused fires that have burned nearly 700 acres.

More information on restrictions and regulations is available on the Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch Center's website, at www.bmidc.org.

Several large fires continue to burn in Eastern Oregon, including:

- Rail Fire** — Burning five miles west of Unity in Baker County, the Rail Fire has grown to 28,209 acres. It is 20 percent contained, and spreading south into the Monument Rock Wilderness on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. The cause of the fire, which started July 31, is still under investigation, though no lightning was detected in the area that day. There are 934 personnel working to control the blaze, and crews remained busy Wednesday extinguishing a 70-acre spot fire near Elk Flat. A large column of smoke could be seen from miles away, including Ukiah in Umatilla County.

- Withers Fire** — The human-caused Withers Fire has exploded to 800 acres about a mile north Paisley in Lake County, prompting a Level 1 evacuation notice for the small town of 243 people. The fire started Wednesday on the Bureau of Land Management Lakeview District, and is moving into the Fremont-Winema National Forest. Three other fires were also discovered Wednesday in the area, but are posing no threat. All are under investigation. The fire danger is extreme in both Lake and Klamath counties.

HERMISTON**Dealerships team up to assist sports programs**

By **ALEXA LOUGEE**
East Oregonian

Two local auto dealerships are teaming up to help Hermiston sports programs.

Tom Denchel Ford is bringing the Ford Motor Company's Drive 4 UR School event to Hermiston. Tom Denchel Ford will donate \$20 for every person who test drives a Ford vehicle at Hermiston High School on Saturday, Aug. 27 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Hermiston boys' soccer and football program have the potential to raise up to \$6,000 for each program.

The soccer program could receive an additional \$2,000 for eligible test drives on a 2017 Ford Escape, meaning the soccer team could raise up to \$8,000 on Saturday.

Also on Saturday,

Hermiston Chrysler Dodge Jeep RAM is will be doing the Gridiron Challenge, with the potential to raise up to \$5,000 for the football program.

Drivers can test a Dodge RAM truck and Hermiston Chrysler Dodge will donate \$20 per test drive in support of the football program.

In order to do a test drive, a person must be 18 years of age or older and have a valid driver's license. Eligible drivers can test both a Ford and Dodge to help both sports programs.

There is a limit of one test drive for each program per household.

The football team will scrimmage on Aug. 27 from 9-11 a.m. at the Kennison Field and a soccer game between Hermiston and Umatilla will be held at 6 p.m.

Month-old infant dies in Stanfield

A month-old Stanfield infant died Thursday.

Medics from Umatilla County Fire District 1, Hermiston, and the Stanfield quick response team responded to a call at 11:09 a.m. for an unresponsive infant on the 400 block of East Ball Avenue.

Fire District 1 battalion chief Corey Gorham said the crew worked to resuscitate the child and called the emergency department at Good Shepherd Medical Center for more direction.

The doctor, though, Gorham said, told the first responders there was nothing they could do. The child died at the scene.

"You don't want to go out on those calls,"

Gorham said.

He said he did not know what caused the death, but the crew did not see anything suspicious.

Bike pit board seeks more time

PILOT ROCK — Pilot Rock is holding onto its motocross park a while longer.

City recorder Teri Porter said the city council Tuesday night decided to table the decision to hand over the Bike Pit after the park's board asked for more time.

The board wants to look into property tax and insurance issues, she said, particularly in the wake of the Oregon Supreme Court's ruling in March that city employees handling maintenance at public parks

BRIEFLY

do not have immunity from negligence lawsuits. The Bike Pit board asked for 45-60 days so it could get answers.

"They need time to see if they can afford to take the Bike Pit," Porter said.

The council also tabled the matter of the city and Bike Pit board splitting legal and surveying costs for the park deed.

Porter said the council, though, approved the \$1,000 Ready to Read Grant for the Pilot Rock Summer Reading Program and listened to her presentation on a park maintenance program.

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

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