

# Firefighter thrown up to 20 feet in gas explosion

PORTLAND (AP) — An injured firefighter who's being hailed as a hero for helping to evacuate a building before a powerful gas explosion in a Portland shopping district said Thursday he was tossed up to 20 feet by the blast.

The explosion hurt eight people Wednesday morning, demolished a three-story historic building and ignited a fire that sent a plume of smoke over the city. Three firefighters, two police officers and three civilians were injured.

None of the injuries were life-threatening.

Portland Fire & Rescue Lt. Peter St. John blacked out after the explosion and awoke in pain as chaos unfolded around him, he said in an interview Thursday from his hospital bed.

The blast broke his left femur and the tibia and fibula of his right leg, he said.

"I got thrown across the street, and I was tied up in a chain-link fence on the ground," he said. "I tried to wiggle my toes because I couldn't move my legs ... Then I looked at my right leg, I knew it was broken at that point."

Fire Chief Mike Myers said Wednesday that St. John ran inside the building to pull fire alarms and called the young lieutenant a hero, but St. John said he doesn't agree.

He did evacuate the building and order the fire trucks to move back, he said, but he looked for fire alarms and couldn't find any.

Other members of his team helped with evacuations and pulled alarms, he said.

"I feel like I'm not a hero. I just did what everyone else would have done," he said. "It's our job. We're to go in and protect the citizens, and that's what I did."

St. John, a father of three, underwent lengthy surgery Wednesday to insert a rod in his leg bone, but he appeared in good spirits Thursday.

He spoke softly from a reclining position in his hospital bed. He had small cuts on his forehead, cheeks, hands and ears from debris from the blast.

When first-responders first pulled up, the gas was so thick the firefighters could see waves in the air, St. John said.

He and other firefighters decided to don protective masks, he said.

"That's about right when the explosion happened, when we got our masks," he said. "Next thing I knew, I saw the explosion from the basement to the third floor."

The building blew up in three blasts — one for each level — with a slight pause between each boom, he said.

"I think there was fire because I saw orange. I must have blacked out a little



**Lt. Peter St. John of Portland Fire & Rescue lies in a bed, recovering from surgery at Legacy Emanuel Medical Center, Thursday in Portland. St. John was injured during a natural gas explosion near a construction site Wednesday.**

**"I feel like I'm not a hero. I just did what everyone else would have done. It's our job. We're to go in and protect the citizens, and that's what I did."**

— Lt. Peter St. John, of Portland Fire & Rescue

... because I felt the heat wave push me back and the next thing I knew I was on the ground, just in pain," he said.

As St. John waited to be evacuated from the scene, he noticed live power lines nearby and heard at least one more explosion, he said.

On Thursday, Myers reiterated that the heroism of St. John and others prevented a far worse outcome.

"I fully expected to get here and have firefighter fatalities," he said, adding that from the call he received he expected to find "numbers of firefighters down."

The blast reduced to rubble a 110-year-old building that housed a bagel shop and other businesses in the popular NW 23rd Street shopping district.

The walls and windows of a nearby building were blown out, and businesses three blocks away reported that their doors flew open from the force of the blast.

The intersections near the blast site

were still closed Thursday.

NW Natural released a timeline saying the explosion occurred at 9:38 a.m., when many businesses were still closed.

Portland's NW 23rd Street — nicknamed "Trendy Third" — is packed with boutiques, bars and restaurants. Many are on street level with pricey apartments on the upper levels and a day care facility in the vicinity.

Construction workers nicked a three-quarter-inch natural gas line outside the building and gas collected inside. But the ignition source has yet to be determined.

The utility said it got a call at 8:55 a.m. about the gas line being hit. Authorities and utility workers responded in 15 minutes and evacuated the building, NW Natural CEO David Anderson said at a news conference.

People reported smelling gas as they were evacuated and later felt the explosion.

An employee at a nearby kitchen accessories store said he was in the washroom when he felt a huge explosion and emerged to find thick smoke and haze. Scott Bergler said 15 windows in the first-floor store were blown out.

As he evacuated the Kitchen Kaboodle shop, Bergler saw a firefighter on the ground who had been knocked flat by the blast.

"He was obviously in shock and crawling and having a hard time standing up," Bergler said.

## BRIEFLY

### State officials: Killing of wolf pack suspended

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — State officials say after fatally shooting seven wolves, efforts to kill a wolf pack in northeast Washington have ended.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife announced Wednesday it will not pursue the remaining members of the Profanity Peak wolf pack.

KOMO-TV reports the pack has an adult female and three juveniles remaining.

Agency Director Jim Unsworth lifted his order authorizing staff to take lethal action because most livestock are being moved off federal grazing allotments in the Colville National Forest.

But he says if the remaining wolves prey on livestock they will be killed.

Unsworth says the goal of the action was to stop predations on livestock for the near future.

As of Oct. 3, the agency had documented 15 dead or injured cattle, including 10 confirmed and five probable wolf depredations.

### Lawyers concerned about collection of mental health data

PORTLAND (AP) — Portland police have been collecting information about the mental state of arrestees since spring, but some lawyers say the practice raises privacy concerns.

The Oregonian reports that officers began recording the information in response to the city's 2014 settlement with the federal government aimed at improving police

treatment of mentally ill suspects.

Portland defense lawyers have said they appreciate the police department's effort to improve its interaction with people with mental illness, but they worry the practice could breach suspects' privacy and could be used against criminal defendants.

Metropolitan Public Defender Services Executive Director Lane Borg compared the information that recorded by police body cameras. He said such information can shed light on police encounters but could also be misused.

### Authorities say single BB gun shot killed Tacoma man

TACOMA, Wash. (AP) — Authorities say a single BB gun shot to the heart killed a homeless man found dead in Tacoma this week.

The News Tribune reports that police didn't initially realize the case was a homicide, but an autopsy revealed the cause of death for 32-year-old Dustin Kopp.

Kopp was found dead Tuesday morning on a steep embankment. He lived beneath the state Route 16 overpass near South Cedar Street, where the man accused of shooting him, Sergio Suarez, also lived.

Suarez was charged Thursday with second-degree murder and second-degree assault. Authorities said in charging papers that Kopp had accused Suarez of stealing another person's property. They also say that when questioned Suarez confessed.

Suarez was due to appear in court Friday.

## Corrections

The Oct. 20 article "Center to help children deal with grief" misstated the ages of the children the center will serve. It is ages 5 to 18. The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211  
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211  
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Closed major holidays

www.eastoregonian.com

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East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published daily except Sunday, Monday and Dec. 25, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Copyright © 2016, EO Media Group

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### Single copy price:

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### AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Mostly cloudy with a shower	Intervals of clouds and sunshine	A thick cloud cover	Considerable clouds	Clouds and sun with a shower
59° 43°	61° 43°	60° 46°	67° 45°	62° 42°
63° 44°	64° 42°	61° 44°	69° 42°	65° 41°

### ALMANAC

#### PENDLETON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

#### TEMPERATURE

HIGH	LOW
69°	54°
62°	39°
Normals	84° (2003) 16° (1911)

#### PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.01"
Month to date	1.23"
Normal month to date	0.65"
Year to date	9.30"
Last year to date	5.89"
Normal year to date	9.63"

#### HERMISTON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

#### TEMPERATURE

HIGH	LOW
65°	50°
63°	38°
Records	82° (1940) 17° (1949)

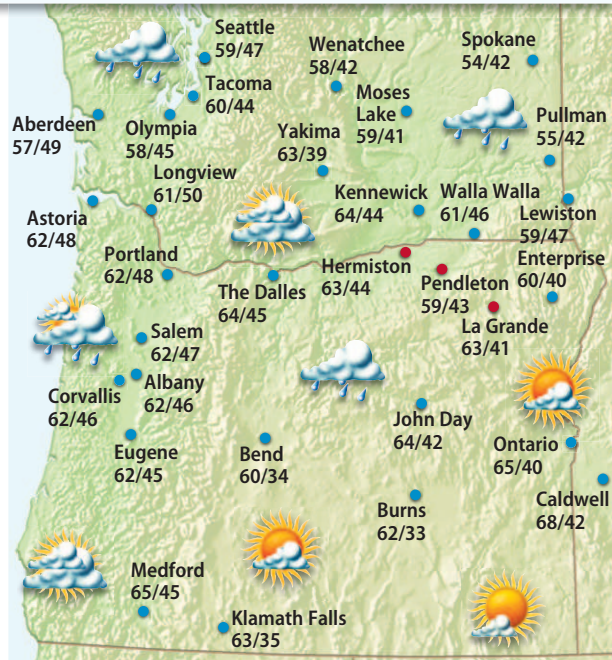
#### PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	0.90"
Normal month to date	0.38"
Year to date	6.34"
Last year to date	3.71"
Normal year to date	6.97"

#### SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	7:20 a.m.
Sunset tonight	5:59 p.m.
Moonrise today	11:09 p.m.
Moonset today	1:21 p.m.

Last	New	First	Full
Oct 22	Oct 30	Nov 7	Nov 14



### REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Variable cloudiness today; a passing shower, except dry in central parts.  
Eastern and Central Oregon: A passing shower today; any time across the north, in the afternoon in central parts.  
Western Washington: Mostly cloudy today; a passing shower, except periods of rain at the coast.  
Eastern Washington: Mostly cloudy today with a shower in the area.  
Cascades: More clouds than sun today; a shower during the morning, but any time across the north.  
Northern California: Partly sunny today. Partly cloudy tonight. Partly sunny tomorrow.

### REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Sat.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	62	48	r	63	51	r
Baker City	61	34	c	58	35	c
Bend	60	34	pc	60	41	c
Brookings	59	48	c	60	52	c
Burns	62	33	pc	60	35	c
Enterprise	60	40	c	55	40	c
Eugene	62	45	c	63	48	c
Heppner	59	41	c	60	41	pc
Hermiston	63	44	sh	64	42	pc
John Day	64	42	c	59	42	c
Klamath Falls	63	35	pc	60	33	pc
La Grande	63	41	sh	60	43	c
Meacham	61	39	sh	57	42	c
Medford	65	45	r	65	45	c
Newport	60	49	sh	59	51	r
North Bend	62	49	c	64	54	r
Ontario	62	40	pc	65	40	pc
Pasco	61	43	c	62	43	pc
Pendleton	59	43	c	61	43	pc
Portland	62	48	sh	63	50	c
Redmond	60	33	pc	62	40	c
Salem	62	47	c	61	49	c
Spokane	54	42	c	54	41	pc
Ukiah	60	38	sh	58	38	c
Vancouver	61	48	sh	61	50	c
Walla Walla	61	46	sh	61	47	pc
Yakima	63	39	c	62	42	pc

### WORLD CITIES

	Today			Sat.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	55	50	sh	56	42	c
Hong Kong	83	78	r	85	78	c
Jerusalem	75	61	pc	74	58	s
London	56	43	pc	57	43	pc
Mexico City	67	52	t	71	50	pc
Moscow	38	30	c	38	30	pc
Paris	57	39	pc	57	40	pc
Rome	68	52	pc	69	54	pc
Seoul	69	55	c	71	55	pc
Sydney	80	63	pc	67	53	r
Tokyo	67	61	c	66	61	c

### WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Saturday
Boardman	SW 4-8	S 4-8
Pendleton	W 4-8	SE 4-8

### UV INDEX TODAY

0	1	2	2	1	0
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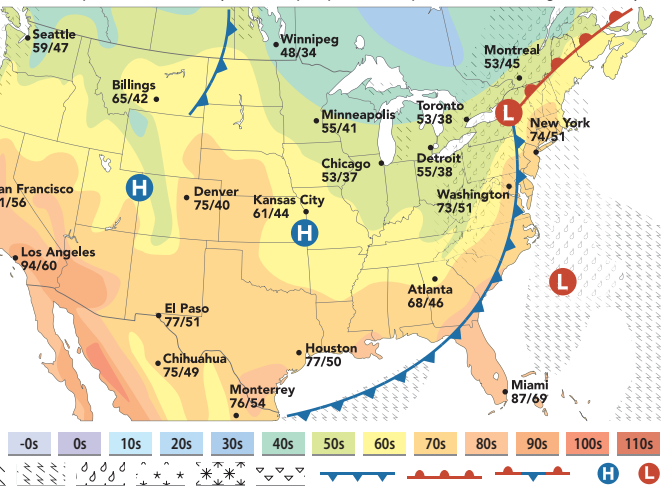
8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.  
0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme

The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

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### NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.



National Summary: Areas of rain will affect the Northeast as colder air advances from the Midwest today. Cooler air will progress across the South. Showers will dot the coastal Northwest. Most other areas will be sunny.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 100° in McAllen, Texas Low 9° in Angel Fire, N.M.

### NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Sat.				Today			Sat.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W		Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Albuquerque	72	47	s	76	50	s	Louisville	61	42	pc	63	47	pc
Atlanta	68	46	c	66	47	s	Memphis	65	44	s	70	49	s
Atlanta City	75	52	c	59	46	pc	Miami	87	69	pc	84	67	s
Baltimore	75	47	sh	60	42	pc	Millwaukee	53	38	pc	59	44	pc
Billings	65	42	pc	63	40	pc	Minneapolis	55	41	pc	63	44	pc
Birmingham	71	45	pc	69	44	s	Nashville	62	42	pc	65	43	s
Boise													