

HERMISTON

Two seriously hurt in 395 crash

East Oregonian

A couple from Spray was seriously injured Tuesday in a two-vehicle crash at the intersection of Highway 395 and Oldfield Road north of Hermiston.

According to Oregon State Police, Francis Browning, 78, was driving a 1993 Chevrolet Astrovan and pulled onto the highway from Oldfield Road into the path of a 2014 Chevrolet Impala heading south driven by Ignacio Ornelas Garay, 29, from Hermiston. Donna Browning, 90, was a passenger in the van.

The vehicles collided and both left the roadway, with the van flipping on its side.

Francis Browning wasn't wearing a seatbelt, according to OSP, and was partially ejected from the vehicle.

Emergency responders from Umatilla County Fire District 1 extricated both occupants from the van, according to fire chief Scott Stanton, while Garay was able to get out of his vehicle under his own power. He was treated at the scene and taken by a private vehicle to Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston.

The Brownings were taken by ambulance to the same hospital and then flown by Life Flight to Kadlec Medical Center with life-threatening injuries.



Umatilla County Fire District 1 responders load an injured person into an ambulance Tuesday after a two-vehicle wreck on Highway 395 north of Hermiston. Three people were injured in the crash.

Staff photo by Daniel Wattenburger

The highway was shut down for about an hour.

Crashes during the weekend were almost a constant on icy state roads. Oregon State Police responded to more than 20 wrecks in Umatilla and Morrow counties, and most — even rollovers — resulted in no injuries.

But a Hermiston man needed an ambulance ride after his Lincoln Navigator spun out Friday around 7:50 a.m. on the Umatilla River bridge near Stanfield.

The car struck the concrete barriers on both sides of the road, and the driver went to Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, for treatment.

And around 12:30 p.m. Friday a Ford F150 pickup heading west on Interstate 84 near milepost 226 slammed into the rear of a Toyota Corolla. An ambulance took one person from the Toyota to a hospital.

Medics also treated people for minor injuries at crash scenes, including

a 21-year-old Pendleton man who suffered a cut to his face after he lost control of a GMC Sierra around 2 a.m. Saturday on Highway 11 a couple of miles outside Pendleton.

That road was the scene of another wreck around 10:40 a.m. Saturday when a Jeep Wrangler with two adults and two children skidded off the slippery surface near milepost 9. The vehicle rolled and came to stop on its top, but everyone escaped uninjured.

BRIEFLY

Courthouse bomb threat sends staff out, police in

PENDLETON — A bomb threat Tuesday afternoon prompted the evacuation of the Umatilla County Courthouse, Pendleton.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said a male at about 12:40 p.m. called the county's emergency communications center and reported he placed bombs around the courthouse at 216 S.E. Fourth St. and did not mention other county buildings. A dispatcher tried to get more information, Roberts said, but the caller swore and disconnected.

Courthouse staff evacuated the building and most gathered nearby at the county health department. Pendleton police and the county sheriff's office responded. Law enforcement blocked traffic near the courthouse, and police and courthouse security checked the building.

That took some time, the chief, said, given the size of the courthouse and the number of rooms it contains. The county opened the building to business as usual, though, once police found no threat.

Roberts also said the communications center determined the caller was in Pendleton but used a pre-paid cellphone. Tracing the number, he said, could be downright impossible. Still, police will investigate, he said, and he encouraged anyone with information to call the department at 541-276-4411.

the building, as school was closed Monday due to weather. Sodium sulfite is a chemical that can be harmful to people with respiratory problems. Superintendent Rob Clark said he is in touch with an industrial hygienist, John Price with PBS Engineering and Environmental Inc., who will be at the school Tuesday afternoon for evaluation.

Price said there was no issue with school opening Tuesday, according to Clark. Classes are in session on a late-start schedule, and Clark said doors were left open on the first floor hallway to help clear the chemical smell.

"At no time were any children or adults in danger during this situation," Clark said.

City buys three foreclosed homes in Sunridge Estates

PENDLETON — The city of Pendleton is the owner of three foreclosed houses in the Sunridge Estates development. The properties were among 21 lots in the failed local improvement district in Pendleton.

The Umatilla County tax department foreclosed on the lots earlier this year and set them for auction on Nov. 1, but just one sold at the time. That opened the door for the county to accept written bids 30 days later, including from the city.

The county at the auction tried to sell the lots for \$49,960, \$36,050 and \$38,830. But the county board of commissioners last week approved the city's bid to buy the lots for \$34,724, \$25,056 and \$26,988.

Developer Dusty Pace also won one lot with a high bid of \$36,100. The same lot, though, would have sold for \$35,010 at the auction.

The county commissioners also approved the sales of a foreclosed house at 810 S.W. Sixth St., Pendleton, for \$8,500 and another on the 300 block of Southeast Third Street, Pendleton, for \$13,617.

ATHENA

Nonprofit closer to buying old PGG building

Port of Umatilla pledges \$20,000 matching donation

By GEORGE PLAGEN

East Oregonian

The Port of Umatilla has agreed to donate \$20,000 to a nonprofit organization trying to buy and repurpose the former Pendleton Grain Growers general store in downtown Athena.

Port commissioners voted 3-0 to approve the request Tuesday, following a brief presentation from the Athena Main Street Association. Commissioner Jerry Simpson abstained from voting, since he is also a member of the PGG Board of Directors.

The association is raising money to buy the building at 459 W. Main St., which has remained empty since PGG decided to close retail stores in 2014. The co-op is now in the process of dissolving entirely.

April Vorhauer-Flatt, board member with the Athena Main Street Association, said PGG is charging \$50,000 to purchase the 9,000-square-foot building.

"That's a pretty smoking deal," Vorhauer-Flatt said.

Community members have already contributed \$15,200 so far, including a meeting earlier this year where 11 Athena and Weston residents gave \$1,000 each. Vorhauer-Flatt said the association plans to raise \$20,000 on its own, and is

seeking \$20,000 in matching funds from both the port and Umatilla County to cover the total cost.

The port pledged its \$20,000 share Tuesday, on the condition the association reaches its own \$20,000 goal.

"Since (PGG) left a couple of years ago, it's been sorely missed," Vorhauer-Flatt said. "We really need more amenities in Athena."

Once they are able to buy the property, Vorhauer-Flatt said the Athena Main Street Association will schedule public meetings to hear from locals about what they'd like to see the building become. Ideas include another farm store, or a space for community events.

PGG has already invested in a new roof and restrooms for the building, and Vorhauer-Flatt said a new business could move in relatively quickly.

"Even if it doesn't become anything like a hardware store, we're just recognizing that this is kind of a cornerstone for us," she said.

In other port business, commissioner John Turner officially resigned Tuesday as he prepares to become Pendleton's next mayor. A majority of board members voted to appoint Robert Blanc, who works as a financial advisor for Edward Jones in Pendleton, as Turner's replacement.

Commissioners Simpson, Kurt Bendixsen and Jerry Imsland voted for Blanc, while Jerry Baker cast his

vote for Umatilla County Planning Director Tamra Mabbott. Dave Tovey, executive director for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, also applied for the job.

Blanc will finish the remainder Turner's term, which runs through June 17, 2017. Blanc has also indicated he plans to run for the seat.

Turner said serving the port was a good professional and learning experience,

and he foresees good things coming for the district in the future.

Bendixsen added that he was encouraged by the quality of candidates who expressed interest in the position this time around.

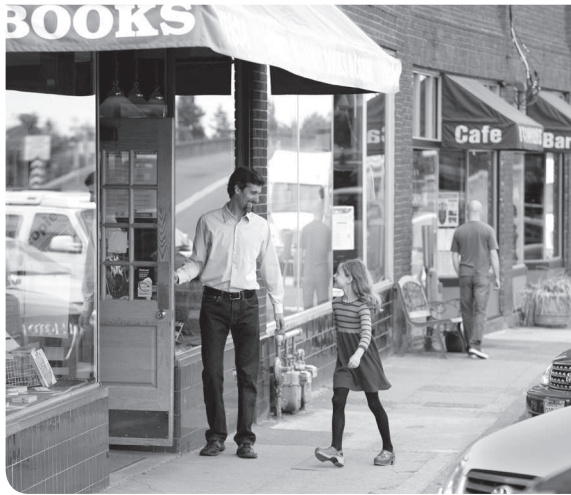
"That says a lot about where we're going," Bendixsen said. "That's exciting to me."

Contact George Plagen at gplagen@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

Leaking pipe releases sodium sulfite into Mac-Hi

MILTON-FREE-WATER

— Crews fixed a leaking boiler pipe in the basement of McLoughlin High School Monday evening, which released sodium sulfite into steam that entered the building, according to a news release from the Milton-Freewater Unified School District. No students were in



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