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Gorge crash leads to railroad changes

Union Pacific agrees to stricter rules after Mosier derailment

By **MATTHEW BROWN**
Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. — The nation's largest freight railroad has agreed to more thorough inspections and maintenance improvements after a fiery oil train derailment in Oregon and the discovery of more than 800 potential safety violations across its sprawling network.

Details on the agreement between the Federal Railroad Administration and Union Pacific Railroad were obtained by The Associated Press.

Sixteen tank cars from a Union Pacific train hauling North Dakota crude through the Columbia River Gorge derailed in early June along a curve in the tracks near Mosier. The accident sparked a massive fire that burned for 14 hours and prompted the evacuation of nearby areas.

No one was injured. But federal officials said the railroad wasn't following its own inspection rules to ensure the track was safe. A closer examination of the tracks would have caught a series of broken bolts that allowed the rails to move too far apart where the accident occurred, officials said.

The investigation into the accident is continuing.

The more than 800 potential violations against Union

See **TRAINS/10A**



Enjoy a free double scoop of Tillamook ice cream at the SAGE Center



Hudson Zednik, 6, rests on Sunday in his hospital room at Randall Children's Hospital where he is recuperating from a rare polio-like illness called Acute Flaccid Myelitis.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

In the HOSPITAL for the HOLIDAYS

Boy paralyzed by rare polio-like illness, but father's prison coworkers have his back

Story & photos by **KATHY ANEY**
East Oregonian

You might not think of a prison as a place of Christmas cheer, but Frank Zednik knows better.

After a mystery illness paralyzed his youngest son, the corrections officer at the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution missed weeks of work and would probably take more time off during the long recuperation. When he finally returned to the Pendleton prison, he got a surprise from his supervisors.

"They pulled me into the office and told me I had enough donated vacation time that I wouldn't have to come back until Feb. 1," Zednik said.

His colleagues and other Department of Corrections around the state had pooled days off and gifted them to Zednik, who had worked there as a corrections officer for only four months. Zednik was stunned. His prison colleagues had also adopted the Zedniks as one of the prison's annual Christmas families and raised about \$5,000.

"I told them, 'You guys are going to make me cry,'" he said.

A few weeks earlier, life had changed for the Zednik family when six-year-old Hudson developed a cold. The boy stayed home for two days, rallied enough to return to school, but then got sicker. His doctor prescribed antibiotics for an ear infection. On Oct. 3, Hudson lay weakly on the couch, having trouble even raising an arm to scratch his itchy eye. Frank had to leave Baker City where the family lives to head to Pendleton for work. His wife Shakira promised to stay in touch. She ran a warm bath for Hudson.

After soaking for a bit, Hudson told his mother he felt like he was suffocating.

"His face went gray and he stopped breathing," Frank said. "She pulled him out and gave mouth-to-mouth."

Hudson was soon being airlifted from Baker to St. Luke's Children's Hospital in Boise. Diagnosing the problem proved challenging.

"Diagnosis took a while. They ran different scenarios from meningitis to botulism — they went down the line. Everything kept coming up negative," Frank said. "It appeared to be some kind of virus that was attacking his spinal cord. They came up with acute flaccid myelitis."

The polio-like virus seems to be surging, though it is still extremely rare. Hudson is one of four Oregonians — three children and one adult — to contract AFM this year. The Centers for Disease Control and Infection reports that the number of cases rose to 108 through October of this year in 36 states, up from 21 cases nationally last year. None of the 2015 victims were Oregonians.

Hudson, now at Randall Children's Hospital in Portland, is fighting his

See **HUDSON/10A**

New director hired for Wallowa Avalanche Center

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

A new director has been tabbed for the Wallowa Avalanche Center, and not a moment too soon as early season conditions are ripe for backcountry excursions in Eastern Oregon.

Victor McNeil, a professional ski guide for Wallowa Alpine Huts in Enterprise, was officially hired Monday by the nonprofit avalanche center. He succeeds former director Kip Rand, who died March 8 in an avalanche while backcountry skiing near

Chief Joseph Mountain in the Eagle Cap Wilderness.

Founded in 2009, the Wallowa Avalanche Center provides regular updates and observations on avalanche conditions in the Wallowa, Elkhorn and Blue mountains. Weekly reports are posted to the center's website, and volunteers host educational clinics on how to identify avalanche terrain.

Julian Pridmore-Brown, deputy director for the center, said McNeil has

See **AVALANCHE/10A**



Chief Joseph Mountain in the Wallawas is a popular place for backcountry skiing and a common place for avalanches.

EO Media Group photo by Steve Tool



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