

Ocean tragedy underscores need for awareness

By **ANDREW SELSKY**
Associated Press

SALEM — One moment, Jayson Thomas was on the Oregon beach with his 3-year-old son. The next, they were gone, swept away by a “sneaker wave” as his wife looked on.

The man and his boy were but the latest to be lost to a sneaker wave, which are prevalent in the Pacific Northwest. A leading expert says there needs to be greater awareness to prevent future tragedies.

In fact, Tuba Ozkan-Haller of Oregon State University has just finished the first year of a three-year research project to devise a sneaker-wave early warning system, a project funded by the National Science Foundation. She hopes the warnings will be sent out by the National Weather Service.

The seas off Cape Blanco were not particularly rough on Sunday afternoon when Thomas, his wife and their son, who lived near Eugene, were on the beach, Ozkan-Haller noted.

But appearances can be deceptive.

“People make up their minds about how safe an area is pretty quickly, after watching the beach for five minutes,” Ozkan-Haller said Tuesday in a telephone interview from Corvallis. “That doesn’t give you the information you need to assess that an area is safe.”

While the weather might be fine, a storm far out to sea, even across the Pacific, often generates such a wave. As it moves through the broad surf zone and over the gentle slope approaching Oregon’s coast, one wave can catch up with another, combining forces and allowing it to run



In this photo provided by the Oregon State Police taken Sunday, a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter searches a beach about two miles north of Cape Blanco, where a father and his young son were swept out to sea Sunday as they walked near the surf.

up further on the beach, said Ozkan-Haller, who is with OSU’s College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences.

Six years ago, a sneaker wave knocked two high school students from Eugene off a rock near Yachats, sending them into the turbulent waters where they drowned.

Stormier winter weather produces more sneaker waves, and victims are often bundled up in winter clothing, which weighs them down when they’re soaked, Ozkan-Haller said.

When the sneaker wave came on Sunday, the tide was high “so that means the dry

beach was very narrow and there was not much space to run away,” she said.

The Oregon State Police said Thomas’ wife, Charity Woodrum, who is studying astrophysics at the University of Oregon, was an arm’s distance away when her husband and her son were struck by the wave. Witnesses indicated the two were the only ones who were hit, Oregon State Police Capt. Bill Fugate said.

No one, even in a survival suit, would be expected to survive the high seas and cold water temperatures this long, Fugate said.

The U.S. Coast Guard searched Sunday and

Monday with two helicopters and a 47-foot motorized life boat while state police and other rescuers used ATVs. They found only Thomas’ jacket and a child carrier he had been wearing.

The Coast Guard, state police and local sheriff’s office will continue to search for the bodies, Fugate said.

Messages of prayer and condolences were filling Thomas’ Facebook page on Tuesday, which featured a photo of him and his son on another beach.

One woman wrote: “as a person who has before lost a dear friend to the same waters, my heart breaks for this precious family.”

Rick Warren, a host at Boice Cope Park not far from Cape Blanco, said: “The beaches here are awesome, but they can be dangerous ... You never turn your back on the ocean.”

“They’re called sneaker waves because people essentially don’t watch them,” he said. “People go to the beach, not paying attention, looking for agates and walking.”

A sign along the trail to the beach warns of sneaker waves and high surf, though it was not immediately clear if warning signs are posted where Thomas and his family were.

Ozkan-Haller recommends that when people go to the beach in Northern California, Oregon and Washington state, which because of the nature of the coastline are susceptible to sneaker waves, they study the wave action and ensure escape routes aren’t blocked by rocks or cliffs.

“The more people learn and have a healthy respect for the ocean, the more that we can avoid these occurrences,” Ozkan-Haller said.

BRIEFLY

Police say Oregon boy, 12, strangled by mother

PORTLAND (AP) — Authorities say a 12-year-old boy was strangled by his mother before being found dead in their Oregon home.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports that autopsy results released Monday show that Caden Berry of Keizer was strangled. His 38-year-old mother is charged with aggravated murder in his death, which was discovered Saturday.

The boy’s oldest brother, Colby, killed himself in 2011. He was 12.

Matt Castro of Coquille, father of Berry’s two older brothers, secured custody of his second son last year. In court documents, he said the boys’ mother displayed extreme mood swings and was placing his son in “serious danger.”

Castro says he shared concerns about Berry’s home life with authorities in his county, although Keizer police say they have no record of receiving any reports of abuse in Berry’s household.

Medical Examiner’s Office said Tuesday that the baby boy was stillborn.

The mother was unable to provide investigators with coherent information, including where she had been living, and is undergoing a mental health evaluation at a hospital, said Sgt. Pete Simpson, spokesman for the Portland Police Bureau.

The infant’s death was first reported Monday by Willamette Week, a weekly Portland newspaper, after four homeless adults died this month, which has brought snow, ice and bone-chilling temperatures to a city more accustomed to mild temperatures and rain.

The deaths occurred during the first 10 days of 2017. The first was a 68-year-old homeless man taken to a hospital on New Year’s Day. The others were a 51-year-old man found dead under a blanket at the doorway of a business, a 52-year-old woman with schizophrenia discovered in a parking garage and a 29-year-old man whose body was found in woods where he had been living.

Stillborn Portland infant highlights Oregon homeless problem

A stillborn infant was found with his homeless mother at a street side bus stop during unusually cold weather. And while the infant’s death was not blamed on below-freezing temperatures it has driven home just how ruthless this winter has been for Portland’s homeless population, with four recent deaths attributed to exposure.

The infant was found Jan. 9 after emergency responders were called about a woman standing in the cold with a baby. The Multnomah County

Vineyard worker killed in ATV accident

JUNCTION CITY (AP) — A 33-year-old vineyard worker from Corvallis is dead after he was found trapped under a utility vehicle at a winery near Junction City.

The Register-Guard reported Tuesday that Bentley Hart Chappell was pronounced dead at the scene on Saturday at Brigadoon Wine Company.

He was found by another employee at the bottom of a dirt road.

The cause of death is being investigated by the Lane County Medical Examiner’s Office and the Lane County Sheriff’s Office.

William Hilliard, former Oregonian editor, dies at 89

PORTLAND (AP) — William A. Hilliard, who became the first black reporter at *The Oregonian* newspaper and later its editor in a pioneering 42-year career, has died at age 89.

The Oregonian/OregonLive report that Hilliard, who died Monday, was the first black city editor

of a major newspaper and later the first black editor of one, and his promotions invariably garnered national attention.

He was once denied a paper-route at *The Oregonian* because managers said whites did not want blacks delivering their paper. But after serving in the Navy and

graduating from college, he was hired as a copy boy at age 25. Through talent and hard work he made his way up from there, becoming executive editor in 1982.

In 1993 he served as president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the first African American to hold the post. He retired in

1994.

“Every day was exciting,” he said in a 2010 interview. “It was a heck of a job.”

He was always aware that he was being judged twice, he said: once as a journalist and again as a black man in a white world.

No funeral is planned, a celebration of life is Feb. 25.

Corrections

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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AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Not as cold with showers around	Times of clouds and sun	Cloudy with a snow shower	A stray afternoon shower	Cloudy with a shower in spots
41° 35°	41° 29°	39° 29°	42° 33°	43° 28°

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

36° 32°	40° 25°	35° 26°	37° 27°	41° 27°
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HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

36° 32°	40° 25°	35° 26°	37° 27°	41° 27°
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ALMANAC

through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	14°	0°
Normals	42°	28°
Records	64° (1919)	-17° (1930)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. Trace
Month to date 1.06"
Normal month to date 0.89"
Year to date 1.06"
Last year to date 0.94"
Normal year to date 0.89"

HERMISTON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	18°	-1°
Normals	42°	29°
Records	62° (1974)	-21° (1930)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. Trace
Month to date 0.61"
Normal month to date 0.70"
Year to date 0.61"
Last year to date 0.50"
Normal year to date 0.70"

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	7:30 a.m.
Sunset tonight	4:42 p.m.
Moonrise today	11:52 p.m.
Moonset today	10:54 a.m.

Last	New	First	Full
Jan 19	Jan 27	Feb 3	Feb 10

REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Windy today with downpours; watch for flooding. Rain continuing across the area tonight.

Eastern and Central Oregon: Showers around today; however, rain and ice in the south and upper Treasure Valley.

Western Washington: Rain, some heavy today; watch for flooding. Rain tonight. A touch of rain tomorrow.

Eastern Washington: A wintry mix today. Morning snow in the north. Rain near the Idaho border.

Cascades: Today: snow and rain, accumulating 1-3 inches across the north and in central parts.

Northern California: Downpours today; heavy snow, accumulating 4-8 inches in the interior mountains.

REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Thu.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	53	43	r	50	42	r
Baker City	26	23	sn	31	16	sn
Bend	40	30	sh	39	27	sn
Brookings	52	43	r	50	43	r
Burns	32	22	sn	33	12	pc
Enterprise	35	28	c	35	23	sn
Eugene	52	41	r	49	39	r
Heppner	41	35	r	41	29	pc
Hermiston	36	32	r	40	25	pc
John Day	41	36	sh	39	29	pc
Klamath Falls	38	28	sn	38	27	sn
La Grande	35	31	sn	37	26	pc
Meacham	34	31	sn	35	25	c
Medford	48	36	r	47	37	r
Newport	52	45	r	50	42	sh
North Bend	54	45	r	52	43	r
Ontario	27	23	i	34	22	sn
Pasco	35	27	i	39	24	pc
Pendleton	41	35	r	41	29	pc
Portland	48	40	r	48	38	r
Redmond	43	29	sh	41	25	pc
Salem	53	43	r	50	39	r
Spokane	40	35	i	38	27	r
Ukiah	39	32	r	38	25	pc
Vancouver	46	41	r	47	39	r
Walla Walla	40	33	i	41	31	pc
Yakima	36	26	i	39	26	pc

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Thu.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	36	22	s	34	12	s
Hong Kong	71	65	c	72	58	pc
Jerusalem	61	44	pc	57	40	pc
London	41	32	c	44	37	pc
Mexico City	74	45	pc	75	46	pc
Moscow	20	16	pc	27	24	c
Paris	34	23	s	35	23	s
Rome	51	36	c	51	35	pc
Seoul	42	21	pc	37	25	c
Sydney	99	69	s	76	71	sh
Tokyo	49	38	pc	51	37	pc

WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Thursday
Boardman	ESE 4-8	SW 4-8
Pendleton	SSE 8-16	SSW 6-12

UV INDEX TODAY

0	0	1	0	0	0
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: A storm responsible for rain, ice and snow will exit the Northeast states today. Showers will extend from Texas to the Carolinas. A storm will spread rain, ice and snow inland over the Northwest.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 87° in McAllen, Texas Low -24° in Randolph, Utah

NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Thur.				Today			Thur.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W		Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Albuquerque	49	29	pc	50	31	pc	Louisville	51	39	c	54	49	r
Atlanta	69	53	c	68	58	c	Miami	53	51	c	63	53	r
Atlanta City	52	39	sh	51	38	pc	Milwaukee	53	64	s	63	65	s
Baltimore	56	37	c	54	34	pc	Minneapolis	43	32	pc	44	36	pc
Billings	42	30	c	41									