

HEAT: 'Extreme heat causes a lot of death each year'

Continued from 1A

Thursday and 104 degrees Friday. The record high temperature in Pendleton for Aug. 3 is 104 degrees, set in 1998, and 106 degrees on Aug. 4, set in 1904.

"We'll be within a degree or two of the daily record," Smith said.

Hermiston, on the other hand, is primed to break the record on both days. The forecast for Hermiston calls for 105 degrees Thursday and 107 degrees Friday, beating the record highs of 103 degrees and 105 degrees, respectively.

That intense heat has certainly caught the attention of local health and recreation officials, who are urging precaution when heading outdoors.

John Hitzman, a Pendleton physician and Umatilla County public health officer, said kids and the elderly are the most vulnerable to heat-related injuries. He emphasized the need to stay hydrated in such sweltering conditions. And no, alcohol and caffeine drinks don't count.

"Dehydration is the biggest danger people run into in the hot weather," Hitzman said. "They may not realize how dehydrated they're getting until it's too late."

When people become dehydrated, Hitzman said they may feel dizzy, lightheaded and eventually become delirious or pass out. It is important to monitor sweat losses closely, he said, and drink plenty of appropriate fluids to avoid a potentially life-threatening situation.

"Some people actually die from heat-related injuries," Hitzman said. "When their body stops sweating, they're already starting to get into some pretty big trouble."

Hitzman also recommended people wear plenty of sunscreen and lightweight clothing if they plan to go outside, and take frequent breaks from direct sun exposure. Otherwise, Hitzman said people should stay inside especially during the heat of the afternoon if they don't have to go out.

"There's obviously a



Patrons play in the water at McNary Beach on the Columbia River on Monday in Umatilla. With rising area temperatures, the beaches along the Columbia River will become a popular place for those looking to escape the heat.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris



Children play in the Columbia River near McNary Beach on Monday in Umatilla.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

whole lot of common sense that has to take place," he said.

On Monday, Oregon OSHA reminded employers in labor-intensive industries such as construction and agriculture to monitor their employees closely for any signs of trouble. Penny Wolf-McCormick, health enforcement manager for Oregon OSHA, said those workers need to be provided with drinking water and given shaded areas to take breaks in order to prevent heat exhaustion.

"Employers and workers in Oregon need to be especially aware of the dangers of working high heat,"

Wolf-McCormick said in a statement. "That's because workers here tend to be used to working in mild weather and are frequently not acclimated to this type of heat."

If someone is suffering from heat exhaustion, the American Red Cross recommends moving the person to a cooler location, loosening or removing clothing, applying cool, wet towels and providing fluids such as a sports drink to restore both water and electrolytes. If the condition worsens or the person loses consciousness, call 9-1-1 immediately.

Tom Roberts, Umatilla County emergency manager,

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— John Hitzman,
Pendleton physician and Umatilla County public health officer

said his office will be sponsoring a number of misting fans at next week's Umatilla County Fair in Hermiston to keep the crowds cool. As for this week's triple-digit onslaught, he is urging people to heed the warnings and protect themselves.

"We're not taking the heat lightly," Roberts said. "Extreme heat causes a lot of death each year. By simply taking some precautions when the temperatures start to rise, you can mitigate a lot of that."

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

WHERE TO GO TO BEAT THE HEAT

Looking for places to escape this week's stifling heat wave? Here are a few suggestions:

• Hit the pool

Public swimming pools are open in Pendleton, Hermiston, Milton-Freewater, Boardman, Heppner and Helix. However, just because you are surrounded by water doesn't mean you shouldn't still be hydrating.

"It's important to monitor sweat losses and maintain hydration, even at the pool," said John Hitzman, Umatilla County public health officer.

So make sure to keep drinking plenty of fluids. And, of course, wear lots of sunscreen to protect your skin.

• Cool out in the Columbia

Some popular recreation areas around the Columbia River near Hermiston and Umatilla include McNary Beach, Hat Rock State Park and Sand Station, where visitors can put in their boats or go for a dip. But swimming in a river isn't the same as swimming in a pool, and certain precautions need to be taken.

"It's always unpredictable," said Gina Baltrusch, spokeswoman for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Walla Walla. "Just because the water is calm at the surface doesn't mean it's not moving at a good flow."

In other words, be aware of undercurrents and floating hazards, such as logs and debris. Water temperatures in the Columbia also remain low year-round, and hypothermia is a possibility no matter how scorching the air temperature.

Lifeguards are not on duty at the river, even within designated swimming areas.

Boaters should wear life jackets, Baltrusch said, and be aware of fluctuating water levels when anchoring or tying up their boats.

• Go camping

The Umatilla National Forest offers plenty of lakes and campsites around the Blue Mountains to cool down, including Jubilee Lake near Tollgate, Olive Lake in the North Fork John Day Ranger District and Penland Lake in the Heppner Ranger District.

"I imagine a lot of our water recreation campgrounds will be receiving a lot of use," said forest spokesman Darcy Weseman.

A few reminders for the public — fire danger has been bumped up to extreme in the forest, and Phase B public use restrictions are in effect, meaning campfires are allowed only in developed recreation sites. The restrictions also prohibit chainsaw use, off-road vehicle travel and limit smoking to cleared areas or enclosed buildings and vehicles.

• See a movie or visit a museum.

Sometimes the best answer for the cooling off is to stay inside and find some air conditioning. Cinephiles have two choices for movie theaters in Umatilla County — Hermiston Cinema or the Wildhorse Cineplex at Wildhorse Resort & Casino.

Nothing good playing? How about visiting one of the area's fine museums? Here's a few recommendations:

Tamástlikt Cultural Institute, 47106 Wildhorse Blvd., Mission. Learn about the history and traditions of the Umatilla, Cayuse and Walla Walla tribes through interactive exhibits and special events

SAGE Center, 101 Olson Road, Boardman. Highlights agriculture and energy around the Port of Morrow and Eastern Oregon.

Umatilla County Historical Society, 108 SW Frazer Ave., Pendleton. Photographs, books, exhibits and genealogy information available to explore Umatilla County's history.

Children's Museum of Eastern Oregon, 400 S Main St., Pendleton. Bring your child to learn and explore through hands-on play.

QUESTIONS: Facility has 604 paved parking spots, 2,656 overflow spots

Continued from 1A

construction. The city of Hermiston also agreed to a \$1 million bond that is being paid back through a \$1 per room per night fee that hoteliers are assessing on their customers.

The Farm-City Pro Rodeo is footing the bill for a \$500,000 mercantile building near the arena.

Where will the money come from to operate EOTEC once it is finished?

Umatilla County and the city of Hermiston each plan to contribute about \$75,000 toward EOTEC's operations in 2017-2018, but hope that as the facility becomes more well-known it will eventually become self-sustaining through event revenue and the \$10,000-per-year leases paid by the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo. The facility's marketing budget comes from a Tourism Promotion Assessment that local hotels and RV parks have added to their prices.

How do I get to EOTEC?

EOTEC is located at 1705 E. Airport Road. Although there is access off Ott Road, during fair week vehicles will be blocked from using the Ott Road entrance and must enter and exit off Airport Road. If you're coming from Hermiston, travel south of town on Highway 395 and turn left on East Airport Road just after the Hermiston Veterinary Clinic. If you're coming from Pendleton, head north on Highway 395 from Stanfield and turn right on East Airport Road just after the Best Western hotel. From either direction, look for the green road sign and don't turn down the similarly named Airport Way, which leads to a dead end at the Hermiston Municipal Airport.

How much parking is available?

The facility has 604 paved parking spots in front of the event center. During fair week there will also be approximately 2,656 overflow spots on grass and dirt, as well as "park and ride" spots around Hermiston with shuttles to the fairgrounds. At EOTEC, parking will cost \$5.

Are there enough restroom facilities for fair week?

There are restrooms in the barns and the event center, as well as a large ADA-compliant restroom building located between the fairgrounds and

rodeo arena with enough stalls to meet state requirements during peak fair attendance without bringing in additional portable restrooms.

Is there any shade?

Not much. You can get out of the sun — and into the air conditioning! — at the event center, where exhibits that were previously spread throughout Thompson Hall and the senior center will be displayed. There will also be shade in the animal barns, and some food vendors will likely provide canopies. But the trees donated by the Rotary Club won't be planted until the fair and rodeo are over — and the rodeo arena isn't covered, so consider wearing a hat.

Will the old fairgrounds be used for anything during fair week?

No. Hermiston School District now has full ownership of the former fairgrounds and everything from fairs past — animals, vendors, carnival rides, exhibits, contests, concert and rodeo — will be located at EOTEC.

What will go on at EOTEC when it's not being used for the fair and rodeo?

EOTEC's event center — which features meeting rooms, a board room, exhibition hall and commercial kitchen — can be rented year-round for weddings, quinceañeras, conferences, banquets and more. The EOTEC Authority is also hoping to market other parts of the facility for everything from horse sales to RV shows. Some availability is restricted, however, by the leases with the fair and rodeo. The rodeo's lease states that EOTEC must get approval from the rodeo board for any third-party event held in the rodeo arena 60 days before and 30 days after the Farm-City Pro Rodeo, and the fair's lease states that EOTEC must get permission from the fair board for hosting any concerts 60 days before or 30 days after the Umatilla County Fair.

Will all of the construction be done in time for this year's fair and rodeo?

That's a good question. The EOTEC board says yes, but contractors and volunteers are still putting in long hours each day on site, so no one will know for sure until the sun rises on Aug. 8.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

EOTEC: Hendon Construction finishing the stands

Continued from 1A

center, we thought that would a good thing to help."

Not all of the volunteers were church members. Sanders said the fair board helped recruit volunteers too, and a contingent came over from Boardman's U.S. Naval Bombing Range.

Bruce Mecham of Hermiston and his family are church members. He, his wife and their three daughters planted about two dozen trees in the area of the new rodeo arena and mercantile. He looked around for a moment before shoving a long protective stake in the earth around one of the new trees.

"It's pretty awesome to see the community come together and put something together," said Mecham, who oversees food and beverage operations at Wildhorse Resort and Casino.

The volunteers were not the only ones putting in their time Saturday, with the fair just 10 days away. Hendon Construction of Umatilla has a 12-man crew finishing the stands for the Farm-City Pro Rodeo. Carl Hendon, secretary of the company, said the crews are working seven days a week to finish in time for the fair.

Hendon Construction's specialty is building food processing plants, which have stringent deadlines. Hendon said they are building something different this time, but the hard deadline remains the same.

Friday was the visual inspection, he said, and the final inspection is Tuesday. Come Wednesday, Hendon said he expects the arena to have its occupancy permit. When the fair opens Aug. 8, Hendon said workers might have a few odds and ends to finish, but the stands will be ready for fans.

Hendon Construction serves as the general contractor on the project, and Hendon said the company took on that role in large part due to the subcontractors. They are local and include Narum Concrete Construction of Walla Walla and Bothum Construction of Hermiston. Hendon said they are the kinds of companies he trusted on handshake deals necessary to get the work done on time.

Finishing everything, from the interior of the mercantile to the

Rivera offered job as interim manager

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

general manager, the board took no action.

The candidate for interim manager of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center has been identified — but he has yet to accept the job.

During a special meeting called for Monday afternoon, the project's board unanimously approved a motion to hire Hermiston Energy Services superintendent Nate Rivera to act as manager for a period "not to exceed" six months, and authorized board chair and Hermiston City Manager Byron Smith to work out the terms with Rivera.

Rivera, who was present at the meeting, did not officially accept the offer and told the *East Oregonian* he was not comfortable commenting on it before the discussions with Smith, who also oversees Rivera in his current position at Hermiston Energy Services.

Heather Cannell has been running the event center's day-to-day operations under the title of business manager, but Cannell has resigned effective Aug. 14 to take a new position at the SAGE Center in Boardman. The EOTEC board started advertising for a general manager position in early June and Cannell did not apply. After an executive session Friday to discuss employment of a

Rivera is the superintendent of Hermiston Energy Services, the city's municipal electrical utility, and is serving this year as the president of the Oregon Municipal Electric Utilities Board. He previously worked for Umatilla Electric Cooperative for 10 years as its community relations representative.

Rivera was involved in early planning for EOTEC and served as an "administrative volunteer" and liaison between the board and consultant VenuWorks in 2013 as the company put together a business plan for the center. In late 2015 he came back to serve on the fundraising committee that raised more than \$2 million for EOTEC.

The motion on Monday to extend the interim manager job offer to Rivera took place after an executive session that lasted more than an hour. The meeting took place at EOTEC's event center amid preparations for the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo that are in full swing, exemplified by fair board representative Don Miller's mud-stained jeans as he took a break from working outside to participate in the meeting.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

acres of sod, will not get easier in the final days before the fair. The National Weather Service predicted temperatures Tuesday to reach 100, then soar to as high as 107 by Friday. Hendon said work crews have been starting their days at 5 a.m. but they might come even earlier, take afternoons off and work at night to beat the heat.

Fair board member Dan Dorran worked hand-in-glove with everyone else, the sweat showing through his shirt. This has become par for this course, he said, as he and the other six members of the board put in hour after hour to get EOTEC ready for its first big show.

They had been away from home so much in the last month, he quipped that their wives checked to make sure they were working and not hanging out in some bar.

Dorran stood in front of the event center and pointed out the animal holding area, which he said is better than any he has seen in years of livestock shows. But beyond becoming the new home of the fair and rodeo, Dorran said the event center is the culmination of a vision that began 35 years ago and a community-wide effort.

Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.