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OUR VIEW



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

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

Stay cool, dude

Eastern Oregonians are no strangers to an August heat wave. It seems to arrive annually this time of year, a blistering sun scorching the region just when the most work is required to harvest our wheat and watermelons.

But these next few days will test even the hardest of local residents, as thermometers are expected to climb to record highs. The National Weather Service is predicting temperatures to rise to 107 degrees in Hermiston on Thursday, which would be a record for the date.

So as practiced as many of us are regarding the heat, it's time to take additional precautions over the next few days.

Those precautions must start at staying hydrated, and making sure your friends and loved ones are doing the same. Drink lots of water from the time you get up to the time you go to bed, and go light on the coffee and the alcoholic beverages in between.

Stay out of the sunlight when you can, wear hats and apply ample coats of sunscreen when outdoors. And remember to keep an eye on neighbors, or others in need who may not have anyone looking out for them.

Do your best to make your living space livable, without breaking the bank or using unnecessary energy. Button up your home before the sun comes up — close your blinds and drapes tightly, especially on south-facing windows that allow

the most heat. Once the sun is down and temperatures drop to more respectable levels, open windows and use fans to replace the hot, stuffy air with fresher, cooler air.

Air conditioners may be necessary during the height of the heat midday, but remember that fans use much less electricity and can be more effective after the sun goes down.

Consider leaving the oven, dishwasher and dryer off during the day. And if you can stand your thermostat at 78 degrees or so, you'll save considerable money and energy — dropping the thermostat by every 2 degrees can increase your bill by as much as 8 percent.

Considering the cost of keeping your house cool, many people tend to share the energy load by spending hot days in public places with AC. A midday movie at the theater or a cheaper and more edifying trip to the library can give you three hours of air-conditioned chill when the heat is at its most unbearable.

As we mentioned in Tuesday's story, many of our towns have public pools, and there are swimming spots along many of our local waterways — though take safety precautions, as the intense heat combined with cooler water can affect swimmers.

And consider beating the heat by increasing your altitude. It is likely to be 20 degrees cooler atop Tollgate, and if you climb high enough in the Wallawas, you'll find snow. And snow is never more welcome than on a 100-degree August day.

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YOUR VIEWS

Oregon should promote natural gas vehicles

Luckily, natural gas powered vehicles are a ready-made solution to reduce harmful emissions from the heavy-duty vehicles we need for commerce, commuting and getting our kids to school.

Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Oregon, producing nearly 40 percent of the total. Diesel-powered trucks and buses contribute significantly to bad air days. Natural gas vehicles are much cleaner than diesel vehicles and capable of doing the same work. They feature significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and in harmful air pollutants including fine particulates, nitrous oxides and sulfur oxides.

For instance, the newest diesel motors emit up to twenty times more nitrous oxides than the latest natural gas engines. We are all affected by diesel pollution, but especially the most vulnerable populations: children, elderly and the sick.

Vehicle emissions are a problem we need to address right now. That's one reason why companies like Waste Management, UPS, Frito Lay and Fred Meyer currently operate natural gas vehicles as part of their local fleets.

The opportunity to convert other fleets to natural gas is enormous. There's another plus: they can run on renewable natural gas. Every landfill and sewage

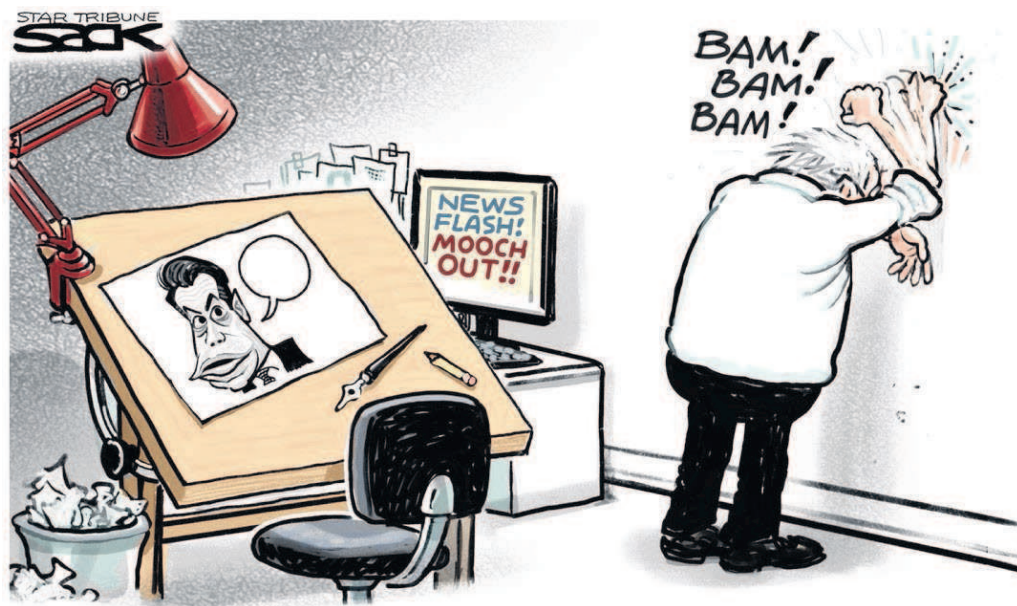
treatment plant produces renewable natural gas but few communities make use of it. Hauling big loads using ultra-low emitting engines could provide up to a 115 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and a similar decrease in toxic air pollutants.

Remember the Mr. Fusion Home Energy Reactor in "Back To The Future?" It used household garbage to run the DeLorean Time Machine. Using renewable natural gas to fuel vehicles is a big step in that very direction.

The future is now in the Pacific Northwest. We can make the jump to cleaner transportation by prioritizing natural gas vehicles for some of Oregon's Volkswagen settlement funds; giving fleet owners practical alternatives to replacing old diesel engines with new ones; earmarking funds for conversions of publicly owned fleets, and facilitating the build-out of safe, clean natural gas fueling stations.

Transitioning passenger cars to electric vehicles is important and we're making good progress on that front. However, putting electric vehicles to work moving large loads over varied terrain is a long way off. Every day we wait to address this issue is another day vulnerable citizens are exposed to the toxic health effects of diesel exhaust. It is time to make real change now by putting natural gas vehicles on our roads.

Dan Kirschner
NW Gas Association
West Linn



News iTeM: NATION'S CARTOONISTS FILE CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT DEMANDING TRUMP SLOW DOWN THE FIRING OF WHITE HOUSE MISFITS LONG ENOUGH FOR US TO FINISH OUR *!!?#@*!! CARTOONS!!!!

OTHER VIEWS

Keeping Devin Nunes out of the game

In early April, news reports were filled with word that House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes had recused himself from the committee's Russia investigation. Outside activist groups accused Nunes of revealing classified information, and the House Ethics Committee decided to look into the matter. Nunes was forced to step aside from the Russia probe while the ethics watchdogs worked.

Now, nearly four months later, the committee is still working, with no end in sight.

It's been an unusual investigation from the beginning. The House Intelligence Committee has nonpartisan staff to watch members for any possible disclosures of classified information. If a member is thought to have revealed something classified — it's usually inadvertent and a minor matter — the staff can bring it to his or her attention, and the matter is usually handled inside the committee.

In fact, it is rare for an accusation of unauthorized disclosure to make it to the Ethics Committee. "It is not unprecedented, but the number of cases that are reported or publicly known are fairly limited," said Scott Horton, a Columbia University law lecturer who has studied the topic. "The treatment of the cases is uneven. In several high-profile cases, the case was opened and studied, but no action was taken."

When Horton testified before a Senate Judiciary subcommittee last December, running down a list of examples, the most recent case of the House Ethics Committee looking at alleged unauthorized disclosure of classified information was a 1995 case in which the committee investigated then-Rep. Robert Torricelli for allegedly releasing classified information about the CIA in Guatemala. The committee took no action.

But now Nunes is under Ethics Committee investigation. The probe commenced after three left-leaning activist groups, MoveOn.org, Democracy 21, and Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, asked the committee "to investigate whether Nunes disclosed classified information," according to the CREW website.

Nunes denied the charges and attributed them to the activists' campaign to derail any investigation into alleged Obama White House misuse of intelligence. Nevertheless, "despite the baselessness of the charges," in the words of his statement, Nunes stepped aside from the Russia probe on April 6.

Now, as the investigation finishes its fourth month, a number of Republicans on the Intelligence Committee are becoming frustrated. As they see it, there's nothing to the charge, but Democrats have the ability to stretch out the Ethics Committee probe — unlike other committees, Ethics is divided equally between Republicans and Democrats



BYRON YORK
Comment

— in order to keep Nunes out of the Russia investigation.

"I don't think there is anyone on the (intelligence) committee who thinks Devin did anything inappropriate," said Rep. Chris Stewart, a member of the Intelligence Committee, in an interview last week. "We're so frustrated with the ethics process that I've been encouraging him to get back in the seat."

"How it has been handled has been very controversial," said another Intel Committee member in a text exchange. "Democrats slow-walking the ethics inquiry to keep (Nunes) sidelined."

Tom Rust, the Ethics Committee staff director and chief counsel, declined to comment on the case.

Now, as the Russia case continues to dominate public attention, the House investigation is going largely without its chairman, who has been pushed to the side by an unusual investigation that Republicans believe is being extended for the purpose of keeping the chairman away from the Russia affair. And there is no idea of when that situation might change.

But if the history cited by Scott Horton is any prediction, the Ethics Committee will end up doing nothing in the Nunes affair. On the other hand, that is not really the point. The point, at the moment, is for the committee to keep the matter going so that Nunes will have to stay on the sidelines.

And that leads to the question of what Nunes will do now. The first sentence of this article noted that news reports in April said Nunes had "recused" himself from the Russia matter. But Nunes says he did not recuse himself — that word has a specific legal meaning — but rather stepped aside from leading the Russia investigation for a while. That meant Nunes not only remained chairman but has also been able to keep up with the Russia probe.

"I never recused myself," Nunes told a Fresno, California radio station in mid-June. "What happened was, the media began this narrative that I had recused myself when in fact all I said was hey, I'm just going to temporarily step aside from leading this." At another point in the same appearance, Nunes said he was "still involved in the investigation, just not leading it."

A month earlier, in May, in an interview with Fox News, Nunes said he is still informed on things that are happening in the Russia affair. "I'm still read into everything," Nunes said.

What if the Ethics Committee probe goes on indefinitely? At some point, it seems possible that Nunes and the Republicans on the Intelligence Committee will say enough is enough. What will happen then is anybody's guess.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.



LETTERS POLICY

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