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EAST OREGONIAN

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Bill Medlock, 55, spends a lot of time listening to the scanner to update his Facebook page What's Happening Hermiston. Medlock and other private citizens would not be able to listen police and fire traffic on the scanner if the Umatilla Morrow Radio & Data District adopts a digital radio system.

Scanner transmissions could soon be off limits to public

Deschutes County already uses encryption for scanner traffic

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Police and fire scanner transmissions in Umatilla and Morrow counties could soon be silent.

Shawn Halsey is the director of the Umatilla Morrow Radio & Data District, the local governing body with the task of providing public

safety communications for emergency agencies in the two counties. He said the district plans to seek bids later this year or in the spring for a radio system that would include the ability to encrypt the signal.

Public agencies including police and fire departments, ambulance services and the Oregon Department of Transportation use public radio frequencies to communicate with the dispatch center and one another.

Deschutes County agencies in late June encrypted their transmissions, according to *The Bend Bulletin*. The move rendered

personal scanners, receivers and smartphone apps silent.

"Encryption is a common thing," Halsey said. "You won't find many systems that are not encrypted."

Deschutes County also plans at some point to provide transmissions online with a 30-minute delay. Halsey said he did not know if Umatilla and Morrow county agencies would take a similar route or make certain transmissions off limits. He said that could be up to individual agencies.

See SCANNERS/8A

Julian Simpson pleads guilty to 2016 murder on reservation

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

Julian Darryl James Simpson pleaded guilty Friday to the murder of Tony Jimenez Jr. of Pendleton. He will be sentenced for the crime Feb. 1 at the U.S. District Courthouse, Portland.

Simpson, 24, admitted guilt to second-degree murder for shooting and killing Jimenez on March 19, 2016, on the Umatilla Indian Reservation, according to court records in the federal case.

Simpson, defense attorney Benjamin T. Andersen and prosecutor John C. Brassell signed off on the deal, which packs a sentencing recommendation of 25 years in prison. Judge Michael W. Mosman accepted the terms.



Simpson

The plea came four days before Simpson's trial was set to begin.

Co-defendant Victor Joseph Contreras, 24, in July pleaded guilty to assault resulting in serious bodily injury, as well as possession and shooting a firearm in connection with the assault. He faces more than 10 years in prison, according to court documents.

His sentencing is Jan. 25, also at the federal courthouse in Portland. Judge Anna Brown is presiding over both sentencing hearings. Simpson remains in the Multnomah County Jail, Portland, and Contreras is in the Columbia County Jail, St. Helens.

Simpson and Contreras were attending a party at the home of Beau Welch on the reservation in 2016. Court documents show Welch decided to end the party and Contreras objected. Jimenez stepped in to help Welch. During the confrontation outside the house, Simpson and Contreras opened fire. Welch took a bullet in his lower left leg, and Jimenez was shot and killed in the driveway.

The case landed in federal court because Simpson and Welch are members of the Confederated Umatilla Tribes and the crimes took place on Indian lands.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Halloween revelers congregate at the corner of Court Avenue and Main Street on Tuesday while trick or treating in Pendleton. More photos on PAGE 8A and online at www.eastoregonian.com

Trick or treaters flock to Main Street



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Art Hill, 10, of Pendleton trick or treats as Jason from the "Friday the 13th" movie series on Tuesday in Pendleton.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Halloween revelers walk down a sidewalk Tuesday on Main Street while trick or treating in Pendleton.

OHA may owe feds \$64M for CCO payment errors

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The Oregon Health Authority may owe the federal government up to \$64 million for erroneous payments it made over three years because of an error in the Cover Oregon website, according to OHA.

The failed website, which was used by state agencies but never launched to the public, miscategorized people eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid, according to Gov. Kate Brown's office. The mistake resulted in OHA making \$74 million in overpayments to Coordinated Care Organizations for patients eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid from 2014 to mid-2016. The miscategorization resulted in Oregon receiving excess

federal funding for that dual-eligible population.

OHA was able to recoup \$10 million of the overpayments from CCOs in 2016 but lacked a mechanism to recover the excess amounts paid out in 2014 and 2015, said Robb Cowie, an OHA spokesman.

The problem was known for some time but was not publicized until after Patrick Allen took the helm of OHA two months ago. Brown selected the former head of the Department of Consumer and Business Services to lead OHA after former Director Lynne Saxton resigned in August amid a scandal over a conspiracy to plant negative news about a Portland-area Medicaid provider.

When the new leadership took over, employees brought the miscategorization issue to the agency's new chief financial officer, Laura

"It's vital that we have a transparent, efficient and accountable health care system because the lives of so many Oregonians depend on it."

— Gov. Kate Brown

Cali Robison, and identified it as "a problem to be dealt with," Allen said.

"It was one of the echoes of one of the problems with Cover Oregon," he said.

OHA estimates that about 40,400 Oregon Health Plan recipients were miscategorized as a result of the error. So far, the impact on OHA's budget has been small. Overall,

the state made nearly \$7 billion in payments for Medicaid recipients on the Oregon Health Plan in 2016.

"It's a very small piece of our budget, even though it ends up being big dollars," Allen said.

Another error related to Cover Oregon and Oregon Health Plan recipients, which OHA officials are still parsing out, also may require repayment to the federal government, Allen said. It's still unclear how much that error could cost the agency or impact Oregon Health Plan recipients, he said.

Brown publicly thanked Allen and his team "for responding quickly" to the revelations about the problem.

"It's vital that we have a transparent, efficient and accountable health care system because the lives of so many Oregonians depend on it," Brown said in a statement.

