



Photo courtesy Oregon Department of Transportation

**A crash at 4 a.m. Monday near Meacham closed the highway in both directions for much of the day. The truck was hauling tetramethylammonium hydroxide, a corrosive ammonia solution.**

## Hazardous substance crash shuts down I-84 near Meacham

Corrosive solution did not spill

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

A semi hauling a corrosive substance crashed near Meacham and shut down Interstate 84 in both directions Monday.

Oregon State Police reported troopers at about 4 a.m. responded to the wreck on the westbound side of I-84 near milepost 233. A preliminary investigation revealed a green 2006 Freightliner hauling tetramethylammonium hydroxide, a corrosive ammonia solution, was traveling westbound when its driver lost control on the icy road.

According to state police, Donna Carlson, 42, and her passenger Morrey Carlson, 42, both of Prescott, Arkansas, were not injured when the tractor-trailer entered into the median and rolled onto its side.

State police and the

Oregon Department of Transportation set up an isolation distance of half a mile in all directions due to concern over hazardous materials. A special unit from Hermiston responded, as did the Umatilla Tribal Fire Department and the National Response Corporation.

Tom Strandberg, spokesperson for the Oregon Department of Transportation, said reports from the scene indicated the tetramethylammonium hydroxide containers inside the trailer did not break and the solution did not leak. Some diesel from the semi did spill, he said, but he did not know how much.

State police and transportation closed the interstate for more than eight hours in both directions while crews tended to the scene. Strandberg said crews needed to move the containers and clean up the area.

"We want them to take as long as they need to safely move the product," he said.

The transportation department closed eastbound lanes at exit 216 about six miles from Pendleton and shut down westbound lanes at exit 373 in Ontario. The westbound closure initially began at milepost 302, Baker City, but around 9 a.m. ODOT reported it extended the closure to Ontario because La Grande and Baker City ran out of parking for semis.

Icy conditions along the freeway between La Grande and Pendleton contributed to additional crashes, according to the transportation department. Winter is here, Strandberg said, so drivers need to be more careful.

Intermittent closures remain in effect. State police advised drivers to plan accordingly and have an alternate route in mind. Go to [www.tripcheck.com](http://www.tripcheck.com) for updates on road closures and weather information.

Contact Phil Wright at [pwright@eastoregonian.com](mailto:pwright@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0833.

## Pendleton Parks and Rec director to retire at the end of January

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

After 26 years in the Pendleton Parks and Recreation Department, director Donnie Cook is retiring from the city Jan. 31.

Cook, 58, said Monday that his retirement was due to "personal reasons," but declined to go into specifics. He added that he was leaving the city under good circumstances and praised City Manager Robb Corbett's leadership.

"The city has been very, very good to me," he said.

When former director Dave Byrd retired in 2013, Corbett elevated Cook, then the parks superintendent, to department head.

The city is now advertising the position on its website. The new director will oversee 22 parks, the city's recreational programming, the Pendleton Family Aquatic Center, the Pendleton River Parkway and Olney Cemetery.

Outside of the department's usual maintenance and activities, the new director will inherit projects

the city's already set in motion. Beginning in May, the city will begin enforcing a smoking ban in parks after a six-month educational period. The spring will also bring the installation of three new playgrounds into city parks after safety concerns spurred the removal of several play structures last year.

Cook said he would be willing to stay on in a part-time capacity after his retirement to aid the department during the transition.

"I do have a lot of institutional knowledge that no one else has," he said.

Corbett said he collected input from the parks and recreation staff on the type of manager they would want, but he's also looking for someone with longterm planning abilities and communication skills.

According to the city's job advertisement, the city is requiring the new director to have a bachelor's degree and five years of relevant



Cook

management experience or "a satisfactory equivalent combination of education and experience." The new director will earn between \$80,268 - \$107,208. Cook earns \$92,068.

Another wrinkle for the new employee is whether the parks and recreation director will also act as parks superintendent. Cook has filled both positions since his promotion, but Corbett said department staff told him it's more work than one person can fill. Corbett said he'll discuss the situation with the new hire and make a decision afterward.

Corbett doesn't have a set start date for the incoming director, but he does expect it to happen before Cook's retirement to ensure a smooth transition. The application period will close Nov. 15.

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## Umatilla County hires new economic development coordinator

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

Umatilla County selected a new coordinator for economic development and tourism. County Commissioner Bill Elfering said the county board aims to announce the hire after the candidate passes a background check, which may take a couple of weeks to complete.

Elfering also floated the idea of a county-wide transient room tax. Under Oregon law, he said 70 percent of that revenue would go toward tourism.

"Tourism is economic development," Elfering said.

The new coordinator post comes with an annual salary of \$42,348 or \$51,132 plus benefits and dependent on qualifications, said Jennifer Blake, county director of human resources. Elfering said the departure of a senior department head is helping pay for the post.

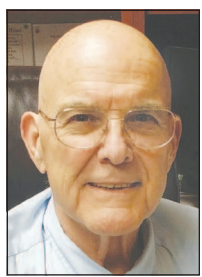
Tamra Mabbott left the county planning director job in August for a position with the city of Umatilla. Elfering said the county allocated

20 percent of Mabbott's time to assisting him with economic development, but she probably did more. She was a senior employee, he said, so the difference between her salary and a new hire is substantial.

Additional funding for the post will come from ending the contract the county has with the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce for tourism promotion. County counsel Doug Olsen said the county is carrying that month to month, so ending it will not come with legal repercussions.

The county advertised the coordinator job in September. Elfering said 10 people applied, and he and a hiring panel whittled that to four, then one applicant dropped out. The panel interviewed the trio Monday.

The panel consists of Elfering, Blake and the following: Mike Watkins, Milton-Freewater commu-



Elfering

nity development supervisor; Mark Morgan, Hermiston assistant city manager; Mike Short of Round Up City Development Corporation; and Susan Bower, owner of Eastern Oregon Business Source.

He said the panelists represent the array of people and groups the new hire will have to work with, so their input was essential.

Elfering also said he is making the rounds with local city officials on a county-wide transient tax. That would help the county promote local tourism of smaller events, such as Athena's Caledonian Games or the Milton-Freewater Rocks Festival. He also said the new coordinator could shoulder promoting agriculture tourism and new events, perhaps even "A Taste of Umatilla County" to showcase local food and drink.

Contact Phil Wright at [pwright@eastoregonian.com](mailto:pwright@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0833.

### BRIEFLY

#### Commissioners try new meeting to get to business

HEPPNER — The Morrow County Board of Commissioners entered into a new experiment last month — an early morning business meeting before their regular meetings.

Kim Cutsforth, the county's interim administrative officer, said the county is in the midst of change and big projects, including the retirement of the public works director and work on a north-end facilities plan. The commissioners wanted a way to discuss topics in a more informal setting than a regular county meeting and hear from each other.

The board held the first business meeting Oct. 18 starting at 7:30 a.m. and did not open the meeting to public comment, she said, nor did the board vote. In that way, the meeting resembled a work session, a common practice for governing bodies.

She said the early hour guaranteed commissioners and staff could meet. Regular meetings start at 9 a.m., she said, but sometimes go for hours.

Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson said the meeting was open to the public, and Cutsforth said there was a public notice about the meeting and its minutes are public record. Nelson also said there are concerns that future business meetings should have a more formal agenda, and the county board plans to address that.

#### City accepting applications for nine open positions

HERMISTON — The city of Hermiston is accepting applications for nine openings on city boards and committees.

The deadline to apply is Nov. 29, or until openings are filled. Positions include the following:

- Hispanic Advisory Committee position 2, remainder of a three-year term ending June 30, 2020
- Budget Committee positions 4, 5 and 6, three-year terms run Jan. 1, 2018 to Dec. 31, 2020
- Recreation Projects Fund Advisory Committee positions 3 and 4, three-year term running Jan. 1, 2018 to Dec. 31, 2020
- Faith-Based Advisory Committee positions 1 and 2, three-year term running Jan. 1, 2018 to Dec. 31, 2020
- EOTEC Board position 2, four-year term beginning Jan. 1, 2018 to Dec. 31, 2021

Applications can be found at city hall, 180 N.E. Second St., or online at [hermiston.or.us](http://hermiston.or.us). They can be returned to city hall or emailed to Lilly Alarcon-Strong at [alarcon-strong@hermiston.or.us](mailto:alarcon-strong@hermiston.or.us). Applicants must not be city employees, elected city officials, already serving on two other city committees or selling more than \$7,500 in services or goods to the city in a calendar year. Preference is given to Hermiston residents.

Briefs are compiled from staff and wire reports, and press releases. Email press releases to [news@eastoregonian.com](mailto:news@eastoregonian.com)

INTRODUCING

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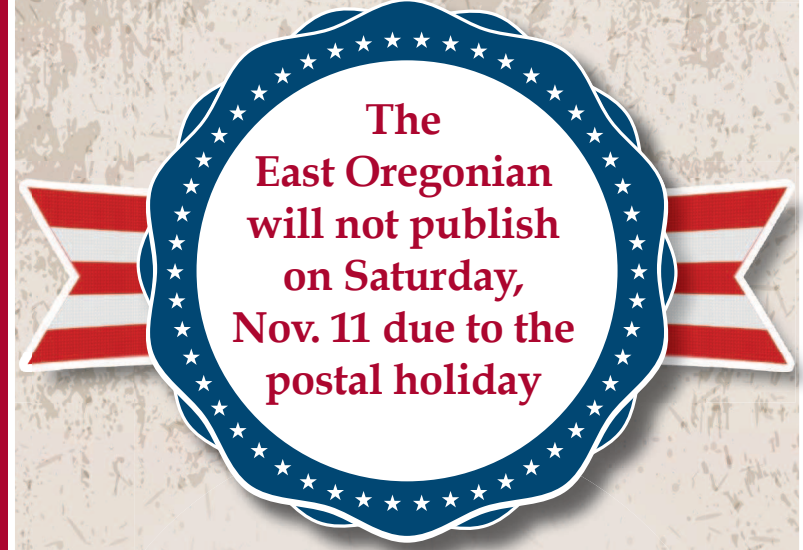
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The East Oregonian will not publish on Saturday, Nov. 11 due to the postal holiday

Look for your BONUS EDITION of the EO on Friday, Nov. 10

- Special section profiling local veterans from four wars: WWII to Iraq
- Friday and Weekend comics, Dear Abby, Days Gone By and This Day in History
- Double Sudoku and crossword puzzles
- TV listings for Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday

Veterans Day Tribute  
Friday, Nov. 10