

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## Oversight problems endemic at Health Authority

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — While technical failures are to blame for recent issues at the Oregon Health Authority, observers say mismanagement is likely at the root of its problems.

Last week's news that OHA overpaid Medicaid providers by \$74 million over three years was merely the latest in a steady stream of negative news about the agency, which has thousands of employees and a budget of roughly \$10 billion per year.

In addition to the overpayment issue, and recent problems with verifying patient eligibility for Medicaid, state government is also haunted by the specter of Cover Oregon, a failed health insurance exchange, which cost taxpayers \$300 million.

Management issues may, in part, explain why the list of errors is growing long, said Steve Buckstein, founder of the Cascade Policy Institute, an Oregon libertarian and free-market think tank.

"You know, in one sense they're software problems," Buckstein said. "In another sense, they're management problems, because they're so complex, because they don't think through all the problems they'll have to deal with."

Problems have been building at the agency for some time.

"OHA has been in deep trouble now for years, and this feels like just a continuation of problems that are endemic to the organization," said Jim Moore, director of the Tom McCall Center for Policy Innovation at Pacific University.

The fact that the governor was reportedly not informed of the issue when it arose last year may speak to those problems, Moore said.

"There's clearly an organizational problem," Moore said. "As soon as this was known by anybody who met regularly with the governor, they needed to tell the governor."

The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services sent a notice to the agency about the overpayment issue at some point in

See OHA/10A



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Oregon State Police Senior Trooper Dain Gardner talks to a hunter as he patrols the woods near Ukiah on Tuesday. Gardner asked to not have a photo of his face published because of undercover work he does with the agency.

# Defending the hunt

## Trooper keeps things fair in the forest

By **GEORGE PAVEN**  
East Oregonian

Daylight broke Saturday morning over the snow-dusted Blue Mountains near Ukiah, where the distant echo of rifle blasts signaled the start of elk season across Eastern Oregon.

Dain Gardner, senior trooper with the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division, began his day at 5 a.m., noting the perfect hunting conditions that included below-freezing temperatures and just enough white on the ground to easily spy a well-trodden game trail or herd of elk.

"This is my office," Gardner said behind the wheel of his patrol truck. "If you can't enjoy the job working out here, there's something wrong with you."

Saturday marked the first day of the second season for rifle elk hunting in Oregon, which runs through Sunday, Nov. 12. The first rifle season was Oct. 25-29, while archery season for deer and elk went



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Oregon State Police Senior Trooper Dain Gardner talks to two Salem hunters as he patrolled the woods near Ukiah on Tuesday.

from Aug. 26 through Sept. 24.

Elk season is a busy time for Gardner, sending him anywhere around the Pendleton area all the way down to John Day, depending on the case. He spent Saturday in the Ukiah Wildlife Management Area where hunting was open to spike bulls only — bulls with unbranched antlers.

No sooner than Gardner arrived

at the Bridge Creek Wildlife Area south of town did he encounter his first dispute of the day, as two hunters each claimed they had shot the same elk. Cameron Sponseller, with the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, was already on scene to assist with corroborating both men's stories.

"This happens regularly out here,"

"I always wanted to do this job. As far as police work goes, this is where it's at."

— **Dain Gardner**, senior trooper with the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division

Gardner said, joking that he ought to swap his uniform for a referee shirt. "We'll get it figured out."

After examining the carcass, Gardner and Sponseller determined that only one bullet actually hit the elk, making it a relatively open-and-shut case. But by simply taking the extra time and talking to hunters, Gardner said it helps to keep level heads and even tempers.

"We're just out here trying to keep things fair," he said.

**'I always wanted to do this job'**

Gardner, who lives in Hermiston and graduated from Umatilla High School in 1990, has 22 years of experience in law enforcement, including three years with the Hermiston

See HUNT/10A

## PENDLETON

# Rodeo City Inn owner on notice for dangerous building



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Graffiti can be seen through a broken window on Tuesday in a room at the Rodeo City Inn outside of Pendleton.

Hotel remains much the same since purchase in 2014

By **PHIL WRIGHT**  
East Oregonian

Umatilla County notified the owner of the derelict Rodeo City Inn to clean up and secure the place or expect to start paying fines.

Western Hotels & Properties, a limited-liability company in El Centro, California, bought the former hotel a few miles west of Pendleton in 2014 for \$379,000, after the county shut it down due to concerns over crime. County counsel Doug Olsen in June reported the owner informed him crews would clean up the property and get it ready to

re-open as a hotel.

Yet the hotel remains today much like it has for the past few years — deteriorating and wide open to anyone who dares take shelter in its square, barren rooms. While the appearance is horrid, the building itself seems sound and signs point to a bit of clean-up.

Old boxes from single-serving microwave meals and other trash fill one plastic container in a room on the building's first floor. Rubbish fills a few other containers. Someone removed carpet from most rooms on the bottom floor, but they also lack windows and air conditioners. The exterior metal stairs are too dangerous to climb.

See HOTEL/10A

