

# Portland, Clark County join suit against opioid manufacturers

By KRISTIAN FODEN-VENCIL and MOLLY SOLOMON  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Portland City Council and Clark County, Washington, voted this week to file lawsuits against the nation's opioid manufacturers.

The two jurisdictions are joining about 250 other cities, counties and states, like Multnomah County, that have already filed suit.

They say manufacturers have misled health professionals by marketing opioids as rarely addictive and as a safe substitute for pain medications like ibuprofen.

Portland City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly called it exploitation.

"Entities we trust with our health are preying on our pain and leaving a wake of ruin, grief and untold cost to our communities. So I'm very pleased to vote aye," she said.

Clark County leaders said they will work with two

attorneys at the Seattle-based firm Keller Rohrback and hope to file their lawsuit next month.

Chief Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Emily Sheldrick said Clark County is still narrowing down which companies to target for the lawsuit, but similar lawsuits by Keller Rohrback have been filed against Purdue Pharma, Endo Pharmaceuticals and Janssen Pharmaceuticals.

"These pharmaceutical companies allegedly took actions that were deliberate and systematic in providing inaccurate and misleading information to doctors and patients for the last two decades," Sheldrick said.

Keller Rohrback already represents other Washington cities and counties that have filed similar lawsuits, such as King, Skagit, Pierce and Clallam counties and the cities of Tacoma, Mount Vernon, Burlington and

Sedro-Wooley.

At Tuesday's Clark County Council meeting, council chair Marc Boldt supported the decision to seek legal action against pharmaceutical companies and stressed the importance of dealing with opioid addiction at a local level.

"This will not be handled at the state Legislature, it won't happen in Congress," Boldt said. "The only place this will get handled is the local government."

Drug companies deny the claims and have said litigation should stop until Food and Drug Administration studies on the long-term effects of opioids are completed.

But Purdue Pharma said last week that it'll stop marketing its drugs to doctors.

The federal judge overseeing hundreds of lawsuits has said he would rather see the epidemic curbed than referee litigation.

# DEQ: Locals speak in support, opposition

Continued from 1A

generating plants is fairly new territory for the DEQ. He said that while they will continue to look at the health effects on the region, they make their decisions based on EPA standards.

"It's a balancing act we're still learning," he said. "Frankly, the EPA looks at things based on what administration is in there, and that's not a high priority now."

PGE said in its permit request that based on information from the turbine manufacturer, Mitsubishi, they initially projected that emissions would be lower.

Steve Corson, a PGE spokesman from Portland, said the permit request is not a target, but a "worst case scenario."

"Our actual emissions have been less than even the existing permit would require," he said. "It's a limit, not a standard."

Corson said he couldn't say exactly what led PGE to come up with the new limit.

"Typically it's a matter of sharing information with the regulators, and evaluating what's reasonable," he said.

Welch said the number of startups and shutdowns per year vary based on demand.

"If it's going to cost too much to make power at Carty, they'll turn it off," he said.

He also noted that the emission limit is for both the Carty plant and the coal-fired plant, which are right next to each other.

"They're considered the same source, so there's one permit for both," he said. "The numbers you see are combined emissions of both facilities."

He noted that the emission numbers would decrease in 2020 when the coal-fired plant is scheduled to close.

Welch also said that while carbon monoxide is recognized as a gas harmful to humans, the EPA does not recognize it as a strong greenhouse gas.

**Public comment**  
Andrew Clark, a Pendleton resident, said Eastern Oregon residents value

their air quality, and that the proposal concerned him.

He noted that in 2017 the total emissions of the plant were half of those allowed in the existing permit.

"Kudos to PGE," he said. "But if they can do that, why is there a need for an increase? If we can stick with 48 tons, let's do it, unless it can be thoroughly proven that there is a real need to increase it."

Several people from Portland spoke against the proposed increase.

Kathy Spofford, a Portland resident, cited her love of hiking and recreating in the Columbia Gorge, and noted that the Gorge was already one of the most polluted airsheds in the West.

"I'm concerned the increase is going to make it worse," she said.

"Just because it's off Tower Road, doesn't mean it's not getting into the inhabited environment," said Mike Horner, a Portland resident with the Climate Action Coalition. "I'd like to see this issue taken up by a wider community. I know local people live and work here, but PGE is a Portland company. I think Portland rate payers should be able to weigh in."

Several Eastern Oregon residents spoke in favor of the increase.

Gary Neal, a Boardman resident and manager of the Port of Morrow, encouraged DEQ to grant the permit.

"PGE developed this facility with the best information they had available," he said. "These adjustments sound like new processes evolving. They're trying to meet the new conditions in front of them. I know they use the best available technology."

Don Russell, a Morrow County commissioner, agreed.

"The one concern I continuously hear is about haze in the Columbia Gorge," he said. "I know DEQ knows how often we get winds from east to west. The rest of the time, the primary factor for haze in the Gorge is unregulated motor vehicle use from the Portland-metro area."

Russell said PGE has been a good neighbor to the Boardman community.

Welch said DEQ will accept written comments until April 30. After that, review of the comments could take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. They will turn in a draft proposal of a permit to the EPA, and the EPA will approve or deny the request.

Welch said there will be some modifications to the permit, but he doesn't know what they will be. He said initially, PGE had asked for a much higher limit to their emissions, but he would not grant that request.

"I said, 'Give me some data,' and they couldn't provide it, so I limited them to what's similar to other facilities around the country."

## BRIEFLY

### Gas line breaks at EOCI

PENDLETON — The smell of rotten eggs wafted through the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution in Pendleton this week from a gas line break.

Prison spokesman Ron Miles said staff on Tuesday discovered the break in a 50-year-old line. Most of the facility did not lose heat, he said, because of gas supply on a separate line.

Still, half the dining room was chilly until staff opened a baffle above the room, he said. Crews wrapped up most repairs Friday afternoon.

The physical plant, automotive and plumbing shops, however, remain without heat. Those are at the far end of the compound, and Miles said a contractor next week will run new gas line to that area.

In addition to this happening during one of the coldest weeks of the year, he said the smell around EOCI was not great.

### Hermiston man admits to trying to have sex with teen

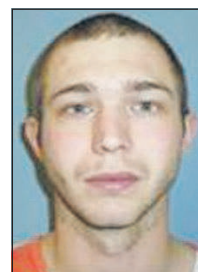
HERMISTON — Dustin Charles Dyer of Hermiston took a plea deal Thursday and admitted to trying to have sex with a girl younger than 14.

Dyer, 24, faced seven counts of sexual crimes following his arrest Dec. 31, 2017, including second-degree rape, second-degree sodomy and first-degree sexual abuse.

According to Umatilla County Circuit Court records, Dyer took a deal and pleaded guilty to second-degree attempted rape. Dyer on the plea petition stated that on Dec. 30, 2017, "I took a substantial step towards engaging in sexual intercourse with a child under 14 years of age."

The deal came with a prison sentence of four years, two months, and Dyer will get credit for the time he has served in the county jail, Pendleton, and he is eligible for sentence reductions for good behavior.

The plea came five days before Dyer was to go to trial. The state also dismissed the rest of the case against him.



Dyer

### Echo council vacancy open for applications

Applications for the open seat on the Echo City Council are available at city hall and must be turned in by March 8 to be considered for appointment by the council.

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4:20 6:40 9:20

**Peter Rabbit (PG)**  
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12:10\* 2:30\* 4:50 7:10 9:40

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