

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH
Publisher

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DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

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News Editor

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OUR VIEW

Better safe than sorry

If you live in Oregon, you live in a danger zone.

So says Andrew Phelps, the state’s emergency director. The risk could be wildfires, floods, windstorms, severe snow and ice, landslides, earthquakes, coastal tsunamis or something else. (At least we don’t experience many tornadoes or typhoons.)

Those risks are why Wednesday morning’s test alerts will be relevant throughout the state.

Phelps speaks from experience. A real alert distributed in May from the state Office of Emergency Management, which he heads, inadvertently caused widespread anxiety and anger.

The alert was to let Salem-area residents know that the city’s drinking water contained cyanotoxins and was unsafe for young children, seniors and other vulnerable individuals. However, the alert went to much of Northwest Oregon and into Central Oregon. Instead of the water message that had been prepared, the alert simply said, “Civil Emergency in this area until 11:28 p.m. PDT. Prepare for action.”

Yikes! Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, emergency dispatch centers throughout the region were inundated with calls: What is the civil

emergency and what should I do?

To make matters worse, the city of Salem’s overloaded website had crashed. Still, those failures weren’t nearly as bad as Hawaii’s panic-inducing false alarm in January about an incoming missile attack.

Wednesday’s nationwide tests were delayed from Sept. 20 because the Federal Emergency Management Agency was responding to a real emergency, Hurricane Florence.

Emergency officials don’t want Oregonians to be startled by the alert tones, especially if they’re driving.

This will be the first national test of the Wireless Emergency Alert. Even though it’s called a presidential alert, President Donald Trump has nothing to do with it. FEMA handles it.

At 11:18 a.m. PDT Wednesday, that WEA system will send this message to cellphones: “THIS IS A TEST of the National Wireless Emergency Alert System. No action is needed.”

Cell towers will broadcast the message for 30 minutes, so as to reach all compatible cellphones that are turned on and within range. A special tone and vibration will be repeated twice as part of the alert. FEMA says each phone should receive the alert only once.



Anthony Quintano/Civil Beat via AP

In this Jan. 13, 2018 photo provided by Civil Beat, cars drive past a highway sign that says “MISSILE ALERT ERROR THERE IS NO THREAT” on the H-1 Freeway in Honolulu. The state emergency officials announced human error as cause for a statewide announcement of an incoming missile strike alert that was sent to mobile phones.

At 11:20 a.m. PDT, the Emergency Alert System will send its notice to TV, radio and related satellite networks:

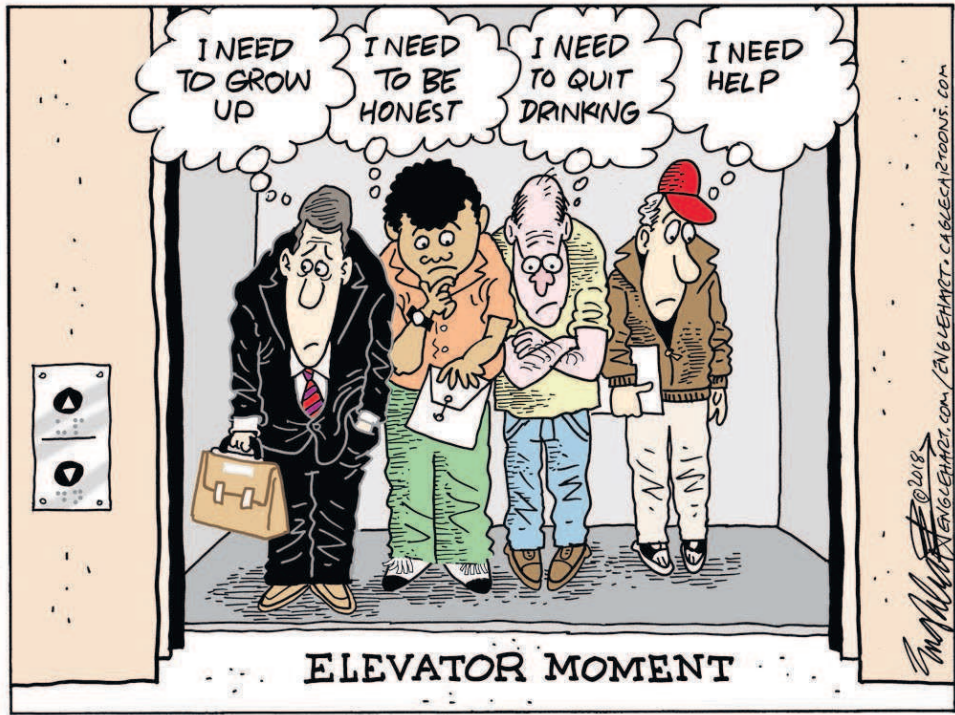
“THIS IS A TEST of the National Emergency Alert System. This system was developed by broadcast and cable operators in voluntary cooperation with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Communications Commission, and local authorities to keep you informed in the event of an emergency. If this had been an actual emergency, an official message would have followed the tone alert you

heard at the start of this message. A similar Wireless Emergency Alert test message has been sent to all cellphones nationwide. Some cellphones will receive the message; others will not. No action is required.”

This will be the fourth nationwide test of that TV and radio alert, although broadcasters do monthly tests.

Please remember not to call 911 in response to Wednesday’s tests.

Don’t complain about the tests, either. Oregon and the nation need them.



YOUR VIEWS

Time to do something about homelessness

It is with sadness that I read about a fire on the North Hill, presumably caused by a fire in a homeless camp in that area. I can understand the worry of the residents whose homes were threatened. However, my real concern is for the homeless, who lost what very little they had. Reading the article in Friday’s paper (Sept. 28), there was a quote that really stood out, and to be quite honest, irritated me.

“We have to, as a community, decide how we’re going to help with homelessness.”

About this time every year, N2N Pendleton starts volunteer orientation for the Pendleton Warming Station. We currently have 61 people on our volunteer list, but only about 15 who volunteer regularly. I was ecstatic last year when, on one of our orientation dates, we had so many people show up that it was standing room only. Of about 20 that showed that day, only about five actually volunteered a shift, about five more volunteered a few times, and we never heard again from the others.

We are a nonprofit organization, run entirely by volunteers. We need people who won’t just say we need to do something about homelessness, we need people that will actually do something about it. That’s what we at N2N Pendleton are trying to do.

I understand that our homeless population are homeless for a variety of reasons. It is not my position to judge why, and I don’t. Instead, I let our homeless know that someone cares. That I am there with other volunteers who care, to provide temporary shelter and help save a life. We also do what we can to help our homeless population

get out of the cycle they are in. It can be as simple as referring them to another agency that provides help and resources that we cannot, helping one study to get a GED diploma, prepping them for job interviews, providing a way to be clean and presentable for said job interview.

Instead of the same old comments about “something needs to be done,” please consider actually doing something. Volunteer your time. As the person who schedules our volunteers, I can tell you that if we had just five more people that would spend one or two shifts a week at the warming station, it would free up our “regular” volunteers and prevent burnout for all involved.

We will soon be publishing dates of upcoming orientations, and I hope that I see some new faces, someone that is willing to put forth the effort to do something about homelessness rather than just say something about it.

KaSandra Williams
N2N Board Member
Pendleton

Buehler is our education answer

We all need to vote for Knute Buehler for governor of Oregon. And here is why: Under our present administration, one in four high school students did not graduate. Knute Buehler will move the graduation rate from the bottom five to the top five.

If you value education, you need to vote for Knute Buehler.

Rex J. Morehouse
Pendleton

OTHER VIEWS

Victimizing the victims, again

The FBI is on the case.

The agency is looking into allegations that Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh engaged in aggressive sexual misconduct — including assault and possibly rape — when he was in high school and college.

And yet there is a gnawing in my gut that nothing we do now will fully or even sufficiently cause us to recover from the tremendous damage already done by the way the Senate has treated these allegations and the way that the media has covered them.

We have severely damaged the confidence of survivors of sexual assault, particularly childhood sexual assault, to come forward to authorities and talk openly about what happened to them.

At the same time that accuser Christine Blasey Ford’s example has inspired countless victims to feel empowered and share their trauma in all manner of forums, the way that her courage has been met in the Senate with condescension, contempt and hostility has secured in many survivors a sense that power will not be sympathetic to the disclosure; it will treat it as an affront and an attack.

The message that the Republican members of the Senate Judiciary Committee sent to survivors, mostly women, but also many men, is this:

Your pain is not our problem. Your bodies are not your own. Your voice, even at its strongest, is still weaker than any man’s, no matter how sniveling and snide. We are here to protect the order, an old order, in which men rule, even when unruly and reprobate.

They are saying to survivors: Your word and your credibility may be all that you have, but they are not enough for you to be believed. They are saying that fear and trauma may have shocked you into silence, but in the end, you will be punished for that silence. They are saying that the failure of survivors, including children, to properly report and document their victimizations will be viewed later not as evidence of fear and shame, but as evidence of concoction and deceit.

“Why didn’t somebody call the FBI 36 years ago?” Trump asked on Fox News. Can you imagine: a 15-year-old girl struggling with processing a sexual assault having the presence of mind, composure and wherewithal to track down the proper FBI contact in the pre-internet age and report something that few people even talked about in those days?

These senators are telling teen boys this: You can drink beer like it’s water and we will believe you when you say you have had perfect recall your entire life despite it. You can write all sorts of damning horribleness



CHARLES M. BLOW
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in your yearbook and have multiple people accuse you of sexual assault, and yet we will still hail you as a paragon of integrity and tell you in front of the world that “you’ve got nothing to apologize for,” as Sen. Lindsey Graham said of Kavanaugh during the hearing.

What those senators are saying to all of us is that, for them, patriarchy and privilege occupy positions of primacy in this country. And, when that primacy is threatened, it is perfectly reasonable that those affected would whine and rage at the possibility of being denied that to which they are owed, as birthright and gender benefit.

As sexual assault accusers go, one would have been hard pressed to find one more able and affable than Ford. She is a professor who talked about the alleged assault before Kavanaugh’s nomination, one who by all accounts wanted to remain anonymous. Compelled by her own sense of patriotism, she finally came forward and told her story with grace and composure as millions of Americans watched.

The senators, unable to impeach her credibility outright and leery of exposing their callousness and contempt, chose instead a patronizing paternalism. They shed crocodile tears for Ford, painting her as a victim, yes: not of Kavanaugh but rather of the Democrats on the committee. To them, somehow she was a clueless pawn in the Democrats’ game to besmirch and indeed destroy the name of a good man.

This diminished and belittled in every way the very real and very credible accusation that Ford made and completely blotted out the incredible courage it would take for a person to appear before them if it indeed happened to them.

In other words, the Republicans on the committee patted her on her head while spitting in her face.

And somehow we still have the gall to feign astonishment that people wouldn’t immediately report an attack, instead holding it for a year, decades, maybe even a lifetime.

People don’t come forward because of authorities like the Republicans on the committee, the ones who will scoff at you, blame you and not believe you.

Just as Ford was creaking the door open and empowering others to come out of the closet with their own stories, Republicans on the committee rushed to slam it back shut and secure its closure with enmity if necessary.

They demand to make survivors quake with fear again.

Charles M. Blow has been a New York Times Op-Ed columnist since 2008.

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