



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The sun rises over the Blue Mountains as a balloon operated by Dorothy Burr of Salt Lake City, Utah, takes off from Howard-Tietan Park on Thursday in Walla Walla. Thursday was the second of five days of balloon flights during the 44th annual Walla Walla Balloon Stampede.

SHAKEOUT: First goal is to continue investing in seismic upgrades of schools

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mic upgrades in schools and on bridges.

Scientists have found that the Cascadia Subduction Zone, a 600-mile fault that runs from Northern California to British Columbia and is located about 70 to 100 miles off the West Coast, could see a massive earthquake. Geologists estimate that there is a 7 to 12 percent chance that a major earthquake and tsunami will rock the Pacific Northwest within the next 50 years, and a 37 percent chance that Southern Oregon and Northern California will experience a large earthquake in that time.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown

released a plan this week called "Resiliency 2025," which lays out six goals for earthquake preparation statewide. The first goal listed is to continue state investments in seismic upgrades of schools and emergency service buildings in Oregon.

Brown's plan lists three programs that need to be funded, including the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching Program. By 2021, the plan says, the state must also have a formal assessment of school seismic rehabilitation programs, and complete an economic forecast for how to reduce risk and fund emergency services like hospitals, fire stations and dispatch centers.

Other goals include implementing a statewide earthquake warning system by 2023, ensuring 250,000 vulnerable homes have two week's worth of supplies, and strengthening local emergency management organizations to have better staging areas and supply chains.

According to the state's report and action plan, Oregon's Department of Geology and Mineral Industries conducted an assessment in 1999, which underscored the state's lack of preparation for a major seismic event, and predicted an economic loss of \$12 billion and more than 7,800 casualties. It predicted that 17,300 house-

holds would be displaced, and more than 12,400 people would need emergency shelter.

In Hermiston, two of the elementary schools are more than 35 years old, and district officials have repeatedly called for upgrades to the buildings.

Bacon said Highland Hills, which was built in 1980, has not been examined specifically for vulnerabilities during an earthquake, but he said the layout of the school could cause problems after one.

"One of the challenges with an open campus is accessibility to the campus during an emergency," Bacon said. "The ability to



Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

First-grade students at Highland Hills Elementary Schools practice ducking under desks during a statewide earthquake drill on Thursday.

keep our students from public access becomes a real challenge."

Hermiston Communica-

tions Officer Maria Duron said the district has not recently applied for any grants for seismic upgrades.

"One of the challenges with an open campus is accessibility to the campus during an emergency"

— Jake Bacon, Highland Hills Elementary principal

NASA: One of the airport's challenges is finding a way to build more hangar space

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the public skies, Jacobs said NASA is acting as the "middleman" in this demonstration.

Jacobs said that if the demonstrations put on by PAE and other two companies selected out of 88 proposals is successful, the federal government could use the technology as the standard for future drones. Abling said the NASA project will mean more activity at the range as PAE ISR ramps up operations over the next two years ahead of the demonstration.

PAE ISR has seen a quick rise to prominence at the Pendleton airport, moving from a back room at the range's Mission Control and Innovation Center to the massive World War II-era hangar near the airport terminal.

Steve Chrisman, Pendleton airport manager and economic development director, said the hangar used to act as aircraft storage and a "giant aviary" that rented for \$1 per year.

The city recently agreed to reroof the facility for \$164,000, but PAE ISR has made some renovations of its own.

The drone company is installing new floors and converting some of the side rooms into a lobby, meeting room, and office space.

All of this has been made possible because the Sterling, Virginia-based company's business is expanding.

In addition to the NASA partnership, PAE ISR

already has a contract with the Navy to develop Resolute Eagle for surveillance and reconnaissance missions.

Ken Bisconer, PAE ISR's West Coast director of flight operations, said the company's personnel presence in Pendleton has grown from 10 to 27, and he's currently looking to hire three more people.

Bisconer said he's hired four people from the Oregon Army National Guard's Pendleton facility and two more who were previously stationed in Pendleton and wanted to move back.

Among the roles Bisconer is looking to fill is an electric engineer position. He also prefers hiring locally because they'll know where to find the right parts and already have a network of connections.

Bisconer anticipated that the company's operation in Pendleton could double within the next year.

"It's just a crazy time for us right now," he said.

Bisconer also highlighted the company's work in the community, which includes donating technology to a Pendleton Parks and Recreation drone program and opening discussions with Blue Mountain Community College about starting a UAS training class.

For Abling, it's proof that the city's early investments in the command center and other infrastructure were worth the money.

Bisconer said PAE ISR considered several places to locate their drone testing operation, but Pendleton's resources and customer service put them over the top.

"If you don't have it, they'll find some place that will," Abling said.

But as PAE ISR and other companies start to grow at the airport, the

UAS range could become a victim of its own success.

Bisconer said he anticipated that PAE ISR would need an additional hangar in six to nine months.

With no vacant hangars to spare, Chrisman said one of the airport's main challenges is finding a way to build more hangar space to meet demand.

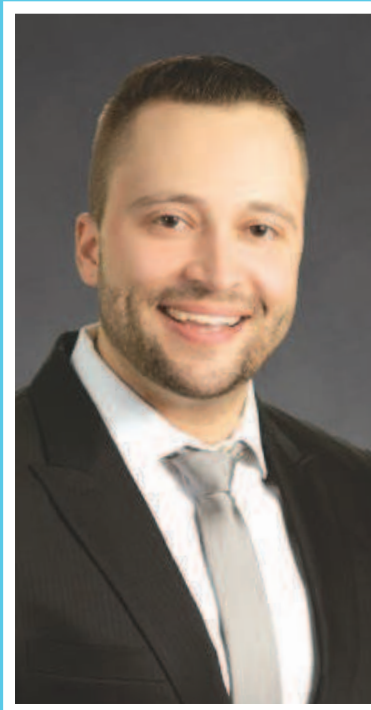


Staff photo by E.J. Harris

PAE ISR has moved into a hangar at the Pendleton UAS Range, and has recently signed an agreement to begin developing drone technology with NASA.

Andrew Schwartz, M.D.

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