

# Firefighting crew has common trait: military service

By ANDREW SELSKY  
Associated Press



Kari Greer/BLM/USDA Forest Service via AP

**A member of a fire crew out of Lakeview works on the Cougar Creek Fire in central Washington state on Aug. 17.**

SALEM — After being in firefighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, members of one of America's newest elite wildfire crews are tasked with fighting fires in rugged country back home.

On the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's only hotshot crew focused on recruiting veterans, members have traded assault rifles and other weapons of war for chain saws and shovels. But, like in the military, they have camaraderie, structure and chain of command. And the occasional adrenaline rush.

"Being in a firefight is way different than being in a wildland fire, but both are mentally taxing," said Chris Schott, who served two tours in Afghanistan with the Army's 7th Special Forces Group. "In a wildland fire, no one's shooting at you, but conditions can go favorable to unfavorable very quickly."

The Lakeview Veterans Interagency Hotshot Crew, based in Klamath Falls, received its hotshot certification after rigorous training and testing, the Bureau of Land Management

announced last week. It's now among 112 elite U.S. wildland firefighting teams and the only targeting veterans for recruitment, the agency said.

Crew superintendent Michael McGirr said he and other managers took then-President Barack Obama's initiative to hire veterans to heart.

"We felt it was important for them to transition back home," McGirr said.

Their maturity and ability to follow and lead are benefits that quickly became apparent when the crew started operating in 2012 as a lower-classification unit, McGirr said. Their military experience also means they're used to enduring tough missions.

"It's a lot of arduous hiking in nasty terrain," McGirr said. "The steeper the terrain, that's usually the ground hotshots are on."

Kenn Boles, a member of the crew since 2012 who did three tours in Iraq as a Marine, agreed that veterans can withstand the intense work.

"You're working hard, sweating, the fire doesn't stop because of those things," he said. "It's like in combat — just because you're hungry, tired and thirsty doesn't mean the firefight stops."

The crew is on leave

and hasn't been battling the recent deadly wildfires in California.

Of the 25 positions on the crew, 17 are filled by veterans, McGirr said. There are three additional openings, and McGirr said he wants to recruit female veterans, too.

Schott, the Army veteran, said the crew felt they had the potential to achieve elite hotshot status after fighting fires in 2015, including one in Oregon's Crater Lake National Park that they almost had contained when winds picked up and changed direction, pushing the flames behind them.

They worked two weeks in a row, digging fire lines and doing prescribed burns to deprive the fire of fuel. After three days off, they worked another two weeks straight.

"After that, we thought we could be the first veterans hotshot crew in the nation," Schott said.

The crew usually works for nine months, with three months off.

"We spend more time together than with our families," McGirr said. "It's a grueling pace. We eat together, sleep together."

That creates a camaraderie that allows the vet-

erans to share their wartime experiences with those who understand what they endured.

Boles lost a close friend a week after he left Iraq. That was the biggest contributor to post-traumatic stress disorder that hit him later, he said, describing it as "a lot of survivor's guilt." The veterans have each other's backs when PTSD issues arise, acting as a support group.

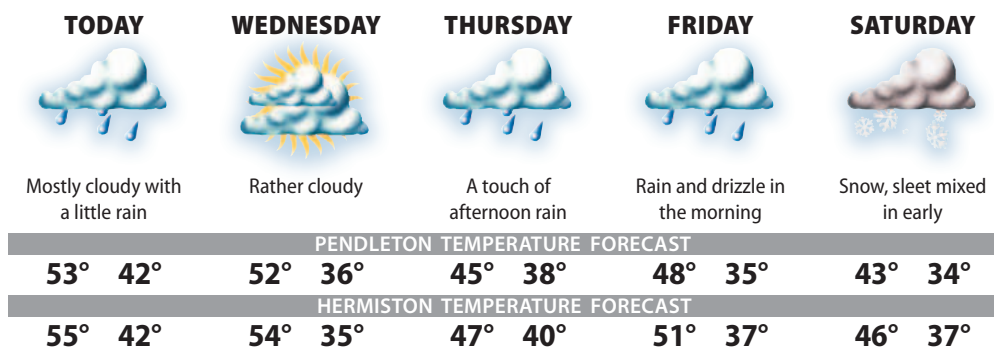
"Instead of bottling it up, we're really receptive to hearing people's stories and problems," said Boles, who was in the invasion of Iraq and in heavy fighting in Fallujah and Ramadi.

Schott, who served in Afghanistan's Urozgan Province north of Kandahar, said, "A lot of times you think, this can't get any worse. And yet you made it through."

He was in an operations center when he heard radio traffic about someone killed in action. It was his best friend.

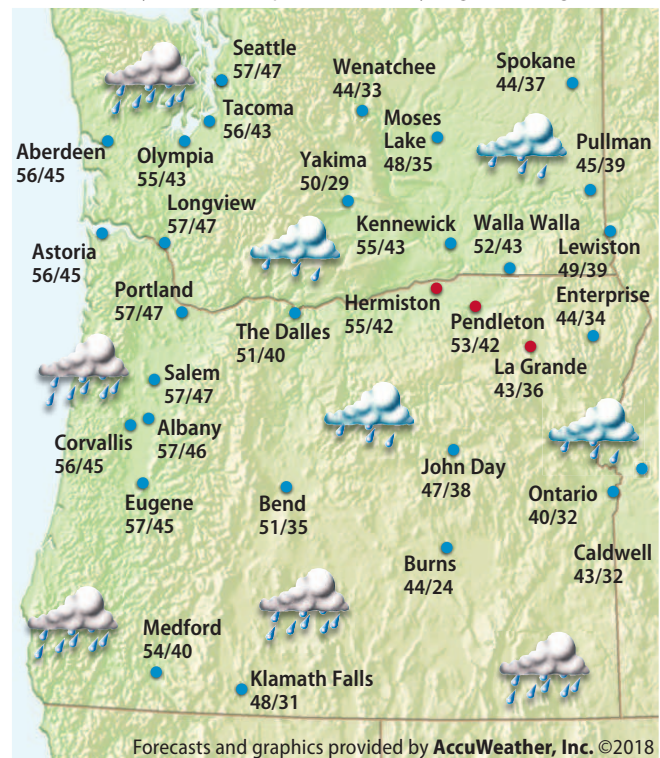
"Myself, I was in denial for quite a long time about my PTSD," Schott said, adding that joining the crew and opening up to other veterans "helped me get my life back on track and where it needs to be."

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	36°	27°
Normals	44°	30°
Records	71° (1892)	1° (1993)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace	
Month to date	0.39"	
Normal month to date	1.25"	
Year to date	8.54"	
Last year to date	15.17"	
Normal year to date	11.24"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	42°	30°
Normals	45°	31°
Records	67° (1933)	4° (1993)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.27"	
Normal month to date	1.02"	
Year to date	6.72"	
Last year to date	8.67"	
Normal year to date	8.30"	
WINDS (in mph)		
	Today	Wed.
Boardman	SW 4-8	WSW 4-8
Pendleton	SSW 7-14	WSW 6-12
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	7:10 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	4:15 p.m.	
Moonrise today	9:08 p.m.	
Moonsset today	11:28 a.m.	

# Oregon abortion laws bring in out-of-state residents

By MARKIAN HAWRYLUK  
The Bulletin

BEND — Oregon is providing more abortions than its residents receive, a sign the state's abortion laws are less restrictive than in some neighboring states.

According to data released by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last week, Oregon residents underwent 7,847 abortion procedures in 2015, out of a total of 8,610 abortions performed within the state — about 11.2 percent of abortions in Oregon were for out-of-state residents.

For comparison, in Idaho, fewer abortions (1,272) were performed than residents received (1,695), with just 4.6 percent for out-of-state residents. Washington had nearly the same number of total abortions and abortions for residents.

"We tend to assume that because abortion is legal that everybody has readily available access to the procedure when needed," said Grayson

Dempsey, executive director for NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon. "The reality is that for women who are in a state like Idaho, they are often needing to cross state lines or get to urban centers to get the care they need."

According to the Guttmacher Institute, which tracks abortion policy from state to state, Idaho has a number of restrictions in place that make it harder for women to access abortions. Those include state-directed counseling designed to discourage women from having abortions, a 24-hour waiting period and, for minors, consent of a parent.

Oregon has none of those restrictions.

In some cases, women living near the Oregon border may find it closer or more convenient to drive across state lines. That occurs in the Ashland area with women from Northern California. The CDC did not provide data from California in the report.

Dempsey said a number of women fly from Alaska

to Portland or Seattle to seek abortions.

In other cases, women may cross into Oregon to get certain types of abortions not available where they live. Women in Vancouver, Washington, can get abortions from a local Planned Parenthood clinic. They must travel to a clinic in Portland if they need a second-trimester abortion, which are not offered at the Vancouver clinic.

Oregon is one of only a handful of states that allow nurse practitioners to perform abortions. In 2006, the Oregon board of nursing was the first in the country to rule that aspiration abortion was within the scope of practice for family nurse practitioners.

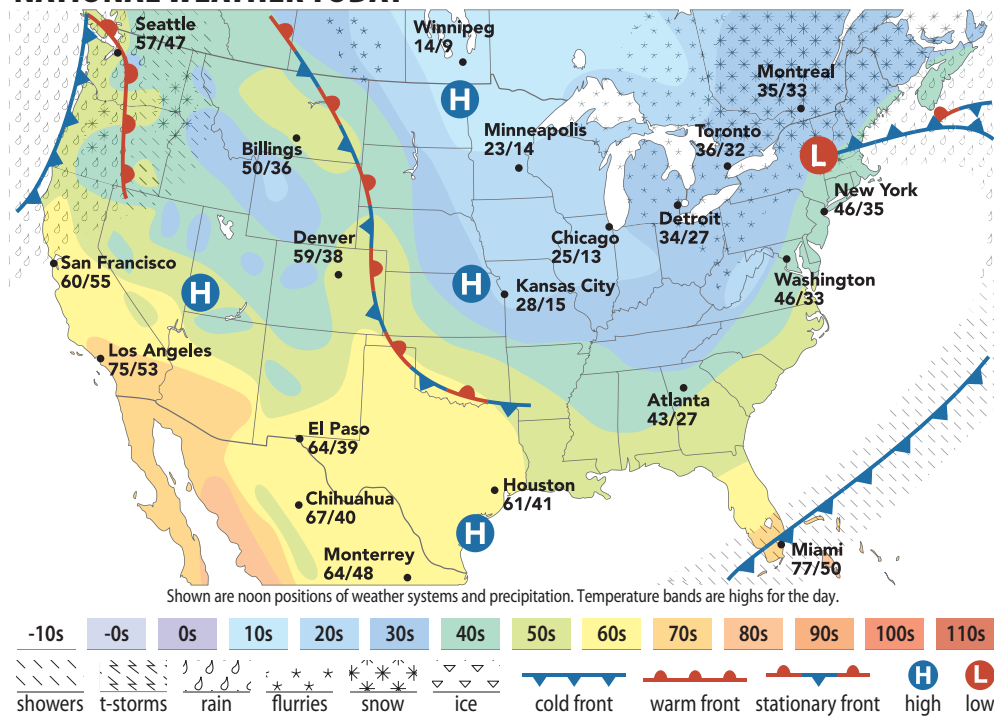
"It's really increased access in small and rural communities," Dempsey said. "That is a huge way in which Oregon is not only progressive in its legislative commitment to reproductive rights but really furthering access for women in ways that have a really practical impact on women needing services."

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 88° in Immokalee, Fla. Low -12° in Gunnison, Colo.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Crabbers sue fossil fuel companies

SALEM (AP) — Commercial crabbers in Oregon and California are suing 30 fossil fuel companies, claiming they are to blame for climate change, which has hurt their industry.

The Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations filed the lawsuit last week in California State Superior Court in San Francisco against companies including Chevron and Exxon Mobil, news outlets reported.

"The scientific linkage between the combustion of fossil fuels and ocean warming, which leads to domoic acid impacts in our fisheries, is clear," Noah Oppenheim, executive director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, told the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "We know it, and it's time to hold that industry accountable for the damage they've caused."

West Coast crabbers experienced significant losses starting in the 2015-16 season when massive algal blooms caused by warm ocean temperatures resulted in a domoic acid outbreak that reduced the length of the crabbing season.

The season was cut short again in 2016-17 for the same reason. In California, Dungeness crab brought in over \$47 million in 2017 and \$83 million in 2016; the amount was down to \$17 million in 2015, during the industry's first major problem with domoic acid.

Crab is the most valuable

single species commercial fishery in Oregon, with an average harvest of 16 million pounds per season, the *Statesman Journal* in Salem, reported.

There are nearly 1,000 Dungeness crab permit holders in California and Oregon.

Scott J. Silvestri, corporate media relations manager of Exxon Mobil Corp., said in an email to the *Chronicle* that reducing greenhouse gas emissions is a global issue and requires global participation and actions.

"Lawsuits like this — filed by trial attorneys against an industry that provides products we all rely upon to power the economy and enable our domestic life — simply do not do that," he said.

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