

Oregon gets a new playbook for earthquake response

By BEN BOTKIN
The Statesman Journal

SALEM — Oregon has a new playbook for preparing and responding to a major earthquake that dictates what should be tackled over time versus a list of tasks to get done.

The playbook provides a two-week blueprint for the state's response and expectations for prioritizing Oregon's recovery from what would be the deadliest natural disaster in the U.S.

Oregon faces the threat of a 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami that would hit the 700-mile Cascadia Subduction Zone, rippling from the coastal counties and impacting much of the state and neighboring Washington.

Emergency planners estimate coastal areas would have as little as 15 minutes notice to escape an incoming tsunami, and as many as 25,000 people could die. About a million Oregonians could be impacted in other ways: needing shelter, food and medication while waiting for help.

To prepare for the worst-case scenario, Oregon's Office of Emergency Management has updated and revised its response plan, a 100-page document called the Cascadia Playbook.



AP Photo/Don Ryan, File

In this March 11, 2011, file photo, car headlights from a steady stream of cars form a line as residents evacuate the coastal town of Seaside after the warning of a tsunami surge from a Japanese earthquake was issued.

Times for responding and recovering are a key change from two previous editions.

Emergency planners have laid out steps they would take after an earthquake based on intervals of time: the first hour, the first six hours, the first 12 hours and beyond.

The shift to focus on time comes after the 2016 Cascadia Rising exercise, a four-day regional drill that offered a look at how prepared the Pacific Northwest is for an earthquake and

tsunami.

The newest version gives the state a clearer sense of how to prioritize tasks and track progress, said Andrew Phelps, director of the Office of Emergency Management.

"That way, we aren't wasting any of the available resources on things that weren't absolutely critical," Phelps said.

In the first hour, the steps are basic: contact the governor, determine what staff are available and start notifying agencies.

"The first hour, it's all about finding your feet," Phelps said. "That first hour it's all about notifications."

Within six hours, the priorities include having the governor declare a state of emergency, assessing roads and bridges for damages and working to get emergency supplies, establishing communications with local government and sending information to the public.

Unlike other disasters that are more self-contained — like a dam collapse —

the state has to plan for a response with major infrastructure damage and some staff not able to work.

As a result, tools like amateur radio networks would be used for communication instead of cellphones.

"We can't write a plan based on the staff that we have available today, the telephone and internet service we have today, the transportation infrastructure we have today," Phelps said.

"We have to write our plans assuming that most of that stuff is not going to be available," he said.

Within 12 hours, more is known. At least three life-line routes are established, providing a clear, designated pathway for getting help to people. Officials know what Oregon airports are usable for response missions. Information about hospitals — both damages and bed capacity — has been gathered.

Within 24 hours, mass care for the displaced has started: medical care, meals and shelter for pets and animals is in place.

For Oregonians, emergency planning can be done at a household level. That includes having an emergency kit of food, water and other necessities for at least 14 days.

"Everyone that is prepared has a better chance of being a disaster survivor and not a disaster victim," Phelps said. "Are people going to die during a Cascadia earthquake? Yes, but more people are going to survive."

Stan Thomas would be at the forefront of a response to provide mass care to survivors. He's an administrator of occupational health, safety and emergency services for the Oregon Department of Human Services and Oregon Health Authority.

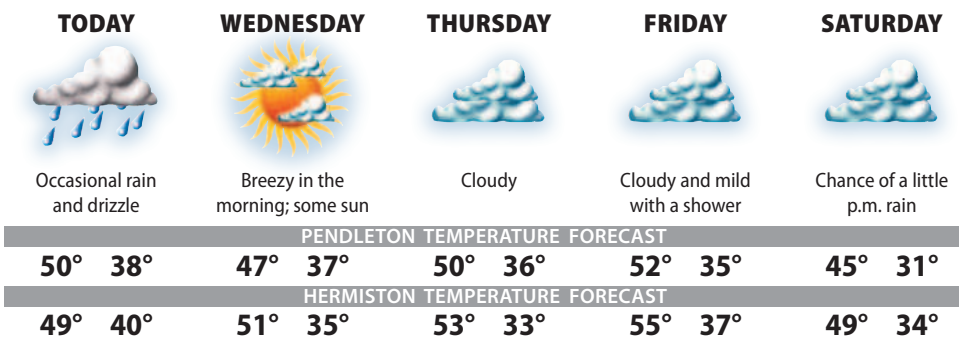
The playbook is crucial because everyone responding has to have a sense of what the priorities are, even if communication is lost, said Thomas, currently on assignment at the Camp Fire in California.

The Camp Fire response, he said, is a reminder of the need to plan beyond the first day: what happens tomorrow and the next week and beyond.

The playbook also is a reminder that multiple agencies are involved, all with different tasks. The playbook arranges agency action side-by-side.

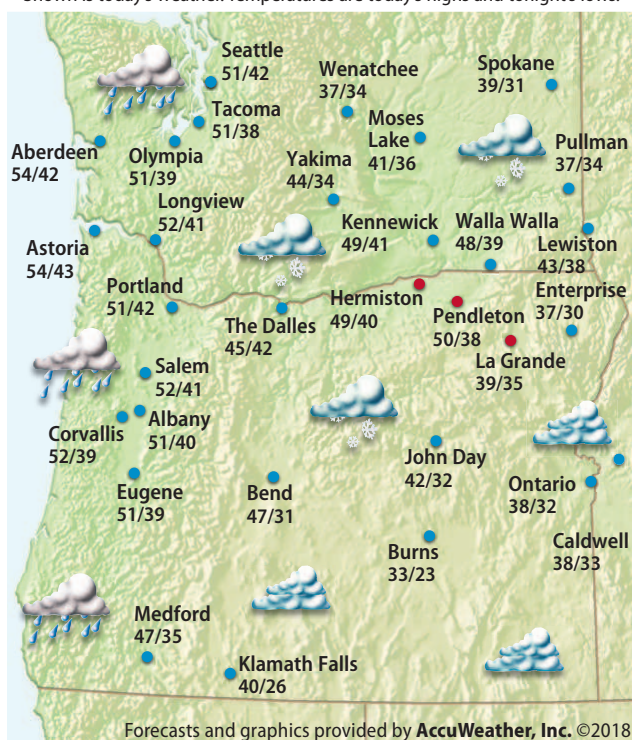
That helps when coordinating a response, said Eric Gebbie, a planning section chief for the Oregon Health Authority's health security, preparedness and response program.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

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



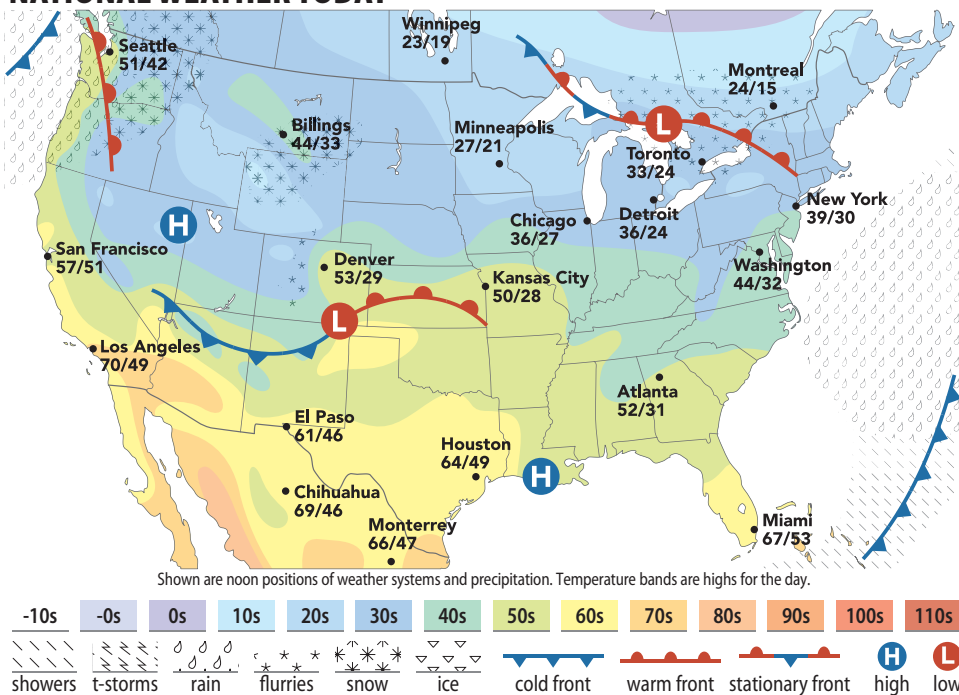
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	42°	28°	
Normals	39°	27°	
Records	67° (1933)	-13° (1972)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.08"		
Month to date	0.09"		
Normal month to date	0.46"		
Year to date	8.96"		
Last year to date	15.33"		
Normal year to date	11.93"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	42°	27°	
Normals	40°	28°	
Records	68° (2014)	-11° (1972)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace		
Month to date	0.01"		
Normal month to date	0.52"		
Year to date	6.97"		
Last year to date	8.77"		
Normal year to date	8.99"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Today	SSW 4-8	Wed. WSW 8-16	
Pendleton	S 7-14	WSW 8-16	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	7:26 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	4:11 p.m.		
Moonrise today	10:45 a.m.		
Moonset today	8:21 p.m.		
First	Full	Last	New
Dec 15	Dec 22	Dec 29	Jan 5

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 78° in Key West, Fla. Low -16° in Daniel, Wyo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Trump plan to reclassify nuke waste alarms environmentalists

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — The Trump administration wants to reclassify some radioactive waste left from the production of nuclear weapons to lower its threat level and make disposal cheaper and easier.

The proposal by the U.S. Department of Energy would lower the status of some high-level radioactive waste in several places around the nation, including the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington state — the most contaminated nuclear site in the country.

Reclassifying the material to low-level could save the agency billions of dollars and decades of work by essentially leaving the material in the ground, critics say.

The proposal joins a long list of Trump administration efforts to loosen environmental protections. Just last week, the Environmental Protection Agency acted to ease rules on the sagging U.S. coal industry.

Tom Carpenter of Hanford Challenge, a nuclear watchdog group, said it wants a thorough cleanup of the Washington state nuclear site, which is half the size of Rhode Island. That includes building a national repository somewhere else to bury the waste once it has been stabilized.

"The cleanup of the site is really at stake," Carpenter said about the proposed change.

He noted that Hanford is located in an environmentally sensitive site adjacent to the Columbia River and susceptible to earthquakes, volcanoes and flooding.

Hanford was established by the Manhattan Project in



AP Photo/Ted S. Warren, File

In this July 11, 2016 file photo, a sign warns of radioactive material stored underground on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation near Richland, Wash.

World War II to make plutonium, a key ingredient in the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan. The plant went on to produce most of the plutonium for the nation's nuclear arsenal.

As a result, the site also contains the nation's largest collection of nuclear waste. The most dangerous is stored in 177 aging underground tanks, some of which have leaked. The tanks hold some 56 million gallons of radioactive and hazardous chemical wastes waiting to be treated for permanent disposal.

Cleanup efforts at Hanford have been underway since the late 1980s and cost about \$2 billion a year.

Current law defines high-level radioactive waste as resulting from processing irradiated nuclear fuel that is highly radioactive. The Energy Department wants to reclassify some of the waste that meets highly technical conditions.

The agency says the change could save the federal government \$40 billion in cleanup costs across the nation's entire nuclear weapons complex, which includes the Savannah River Plant in South Carolina and

Idaho National Laboratory.

Environmental groups and the state of Washington, which has a legal commitment with the Energy Department to oversee the Hanford cleanup, said the proposal is a concern.

"They see it as a way to get cleanup done faster and less expensively," said Alex Smith of the Washington state Department of Ecology.

Carpenter said there "is not much point in doing much else if they don't clean up the high-level waste."

At the request of U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, the agency extended the public comment period on the proposal to Jan. 9. The agency can make the change without the approval of Congress.

"No one disputes the difficulty of retrieving and treating high-level waste from Hanford's aging storage tanks," Wyden wrote to the DOE. "However, lowering the bar for level of protection of future generations and the environment by changing the definition of what has always been considered high-level waste requiring permanent disposal is a significant change."

CORRECTIONS: The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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Regional Publisher and Revenue Director:
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541-278-2669 • crush@eomediagroup.com

Advertising Services:

• Angela Treadwell
541-966-0827 • atreadwell@eastoregonian.com
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Multimedia Consultants:

• Kimberly Macias
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Business Office Manager:

541-966-0822

COMMERCIAL PRINTING

Production Manager: Mike Jensen
541-215-0824 • mjensen@eastoregonian.com