

EAST OREGONIAN

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WINNER OF THE 2018 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

More than enough Christmas to go around in Hermiston

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

One box brimming with canned foods and a whole turkey, an armful of wrapped presents, and a pair of warm socks later, everyone who walked out the doors of the Agape House on Monday felt the effects of Christmas Express as it rolled through Hermiston.

The annual effort by the Hermiston

Police Department yielded 500 boxes of food, whole turkeys, bags of potatoes and onions, and hundreds of gifts for children ages 0 to 11. On Sunday, the police department delivered the haul to the Agape House, which is distributing the donations to families Monday through Wednesday.

Volunteer Ginger Haley checked in families as they came to collect donations.

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Volunteer John Carraher, left, and Doug Alvarez assemble food boxes for people participating in the Christmas Express at Agape House on Monday in Hermiston.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris



Christmas in the park



Staff photos by Kathy Aney

Left: Mary sits by baby Jesus in a manger during Sunday's Live Nativity at Roy Raley Park. Top right: Angels await the birth of Jesus Christ during Sunday's Live Nativity at Roy Raley Park. The event was coordinated by Pendleton Faith Center Church and required about 150 volunteers. Bottom right: The three wise men bring gifts to baby Jesus.

Watchdogs may be unleashed on state agencies

Many ignore mandate of internal auditing

By AUBREY WIEBER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — A dozen large state agencies could find themselves with watchdogs tethered within their ranks, guarding against wasteful spending and question-

able government practices.

They've been without internal auditors for more than a decade ago, ignoring a mandate that they have such positions. That lack of oversight was highlighted in a recent state audit, and Gov. Kate Brown is budgeting for 14 new internal auditors.

Internal auditors can find tens of thousands in improper or unneces-

sary spending, fraud or inefficient practices. They can also determine when an agency is operating smoothly, using resources effectively and staying up to date on best practices.

In 2005, the state made that function a matter of law and tasked the state Department of Administrative Services with setting up rules and standards for which

agency should have an auditor and what auditors should do.

But 13 years later, 13 agencies are violating that policy and internal auditing staffing is at an all-time low.

Last week, the Joint Committee On Legislative Audits dressed down DAS and its past leadership for failing to manage the state's network of internal auditors.

The Secretary of State's Office through the state Audits Division dispatches its own auditors to agencies big and small every year, pointing out an agency's inefficiencies. But an internal auditor is on the job and in house year-round to provide constant monitoring and can take the time to sift through the

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Slow down on that mountain

Cabbage Hill poses challenges for big rigs

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

High winds blew over a semi-trailer Friday on Interstate 84 east of Pendleton and shut down almost 50 miles of the freeway for several hours. Area commercial driver

examiners said when the wind gets that bad, drivers need to park it.

The wreck occurred on the east-bound side of I-84 near milepost 221 on Cabbage Hill, or Emigrant Hill, one of the more treacherous passages in the Pacific Northwest. Starting at the top near milepost 227 and ending at about the 217, according to the Oregon Department of Transportation, the passage drops about 2,000 feet in a 6-mile

span through a double switch-back. The weather on the hill can change from rain at the boom to sleet and slick surfaces in a little more than a mile during the winter.

Tye Borger, of Hermiston, said the reports of 90-mph gusts on Cabbage Hill in the Blue Mountains were the first she could recall in years, but she had one over-arching piece of advice for any drivers in such conditions:

"Slow down."

Borger is a third-party commercial driver tester. She said Cabbage Hill is notorious for its steep grade and difficult going in winter weather and too often crashes result from drivers going too fast or not driving for the conditions.

"People definitely need to respect that mountain," she said.

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