

Truckers deal with snowy roads, restrictions during storm

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

Driving a car in the ice and snow can be nerve-wracking, so imagine driving an 18-wheeler in the stuff.

Dozens of truck drivers hanging out at the Arrowhead Travel Plaza on Monday morning didn't have to imagine. Some had just come down Cabbage Hill. Others prepared to ascend the steep, curvy stretch of mountain highway on their way east.

Long-haul trucker Dan MacIntyre chatted with four other drivers on the way from the parking lot to main building near Interstate 84's exit 216. Big, wet flakes swirled around the men as they shared information about chain restrictions and weather forecasts. MacIntyre, a Canadian from Toronto, had steered his 18-wheeler filled with instrumental equipment down Cabbage on Sunday night and needed to get to Portland.

"They were telling me the roads were insane. You have to put your chains on," he said, after leaving the knot of other drivers. "I don't expect I'm going anywhere."

At the moment, a chain restriction for trucks was in effect both directions. MacIntyre prepared to settle in for the day. The 27-year veteran said if conditions require chains, then you shouldn't be driving. He owns a set, but they sit inside his truck, clean and unused in the original box.

MacIntyre lives in his truck and logs between 15,000 and 17,000 miles each month. The former truck driver trainer ticked off some principles he drilled into his students.

"The speed limit is not the



Charles Nulph of Burley, Idaho, reaches between tires while putting chains on the wheels his trailer while hauling a load of frozen French fries on Monday at the Arrowhead Travel Plaza in Mission.

number posted on the sign," he said. "It is the speed you can safely go down the highway and not lose your load. Drive to the conditions."

He urged his students to check mirrors often, learn to read the roads, refrain from rushing, rest when tired and to be wary in snow, ice, fog and high winds.

MacIntyre's phone has dozens of photos of truck accidents the trucker has come upon or seen happen right in front of him. He looks at the pictures to remind himself to take it slow and easy. One shot shows the aftermath of an 18-wheeler gone airborne over the edge of an overpass and landing on the freeway below.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 4,761 people died in collisions involving large trucks in 2017 (the latest year reported). About 1,300 of the deaths were truckers, while the remaining victims died in other vehicles or were pedestrians.

So far, MacIntyre has only had one minor accident himself. It happened when he hydroplaned into the back of a car after hitting his brakes. He aims to make that his last and only.

Many of the truckers at Arrowhead on Monday rested up for the trek ahead. In the truck parking area, Yakima driver Travis Mos-

ley waited it out in the cab of his 18-wheeler. During his drive from Tacoma, he'd encountered blowing snow, but hadn't been required to don chains until Pendleton. He had decided to take a pause to see if that changed before hauling his load of Polaris side by sides east to Baker City, and then to John Day.

He listened carefully to his CB as a fellow trucker gave an update. Chaining restrictions had been lifted going to the west, he reported. Restrictions remained for eastbound truckers like Mosley.

"That's all we're doing right now is listening," Mosley said. "I'm going to wait it out for a couple of hours to see if it gets better."

Mosley has learned to be patient.

"I watch TV and Youtube," he said. "I catch up on my sleep."

A few trucks away, Idaho truck driver Charles Nulph knelt in the slush and chained up five wheels of his Freightliner truck and trailer. He chained each tire with gloved hands and used a chain tighter to cinch them snug. Shortly he planned to climb Cabbage Hill with a load of frozen french fries.

The trucker seemed undaunted at the prospect.

"I've done it so many times," Nulph said.

Cabbage is nothing, he said, compared with some of the other steeper mountains he has driven. He remembers going over snowy White Bird Summit (in north central Idaho), carrying thousands of pounds of grain in a double trailer. The grade there, he said, is between 7 and 8 percent.

MacIntyre weighed his own plans for getting back onto the snowy freeway, saying the privilege of driving an 18-wheeler is something he doesn't take lightly.

"It's a big responsibility," he said. "If I collide with you in your car, I'll walk away. You may not."

He said driving trucks can be risky business.

"We all have our horror stories," MacIntyre said.

However, he has come to trust his instincts and the procedures he has developed over the years. One habit is never driving when fatigued, whatever the weather. In doing so, he tunes out the inner pressure to hurry on.

"If you're not moving, you're not making money," he said. "But, if I'm tired, I pull over. Whether it's been one hour or 10 hours, my life is worth it."

Lodge: New owners plan concerts

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Baird and Adam Mack as partners.

Both of the new partners have connections to the local music scene.

Baird and Mack both play in the Pendleton band James Dean Kindle and the Eastern Oregon Playboys, while Mack also organizes and promotes local concerts like the Wednesdays in the Park concert series.

On a Feb. 6 tour of the building, Mack seemed particularly excited by the auditorium's potential.

Mack pointed to the room's wavy ceiling and the raised tiles on the walls as features that should create a unique acoustic experience. Additionally, the auditorium's long, hardwood floor should provide concert goers plenty of room to dance.

"We need more dancing (in Pendleton)," Mack said. "People need to dance more."

The owners hope to

make concerts in the auditorium a monthly feature of the lodge, dubbing the series Live from the Leslie.

The auditorium isn't the only part of the building The Lodge partners plan to fix up. Immediately outside the auditorium is a second-floor foyer where the owners tore out a drop ceiling and a wall that was blocking an array of window panels.

The sun streaming into the foyer made it much warmer than the frigid temperatures outside, and Baird said they would have to install a giant curtain to keep the room from getting hot in the summer.

While the second floor will be one the few spaces that will be open to the public April 5, there's much more to The Lodge's footprint.

The facility spans more than 24,000 square feet and features five bars, a cafeteria-style kitchen, a massive dining room, a patio, and a basement floor.

Baird called the facility a

"big, rambling experience" similar to the McMenamins chain of breweries and venues in the Portland area.

The sheer size of the property is evocative of a time when the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Lodge No. 288 was the one of the hottest spots in town.

The owners are also looking to restore The Stag Bar, a ground-floor space that includes a bar, a pool table, and a stage.

Mack has looked through old photos of the Elks Lodge at its height and thinks The Stag Bar could also serve as another venue in the building.

"Every other page was a band performing down there," he said.

Eventually, the partners would like to turn The Stag Bar into a spot with regular hours, although it may undergo a name change.

At this point, renovating The Lodge is a nights and weekends task for the partners because of their day jobs. Mack is an office



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Business partners, from left, Brian Baird, Lance Leonnig and Adam Mack discuss the renovation work at The Lodge on Saturday in Pendleton.

manager at the RBH Group and Baird is an installer for Wtechlink while Leonnig splits his time between Pendleton and his business in Portland.

Leonnig, Baird and Mack are looking for more partners, but that doesn't mean they'll immediately restore

every part of the building.

Mack said the owners will likely leave the dining area alone for now because of their lack of restaurant management experience.

But the owners still have plans to make themselves known for Round-Up.

While the property has

mostly served as a parking space for recreational vehicles during rodeo week, Mack said the owners are interested in renting out space at The Lodge to Portland bars so they can set up shop in Pendleton for the town's busiest week for drinking.

Snow: Many caught in highway delays

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10 p.m.," she said.

Colgan said one of her best friends, Destiny George, turned out to also be stranded less than half a mile ahead, so they stayed on the phone most of the time to keep each other company. Luckily, both of them had enough gas in their tanks to keep their cars idling and their heaters on through the whole ordeal, but Colgan said she did get hungry.

"I was thinking, my dad is going to be mad at me because I didn't have any food or water with me," she said. "But I did have blankets and my snow boots and a heavy coat."

She also said she learned her lesson about always checking to see if the roads are closed before setting out.

While all the stranded travelers were off the interstate before midnight, the road did not open again until Sunday afternoon.

Oregon State Police Sgt. Seth Cooney said he was busy that day with crashes on Interstate 84 west of Boardman and stopped into the Love's Travel Stop in town. People there inundated him with questions

on how to get to where they wanted to.

"The first thing I tell everybody is look up Trip Check," he said, referring to www.tripcheck.com, which the Oregon Department of Transportation uses to provide information about road conditions and closures. "They really need to take a look at that, because ODOT is very good about keeping it up to date."

Cooney also suggested drivers plan for alternate routes. With I-82 shut down, he said, you could take Highway 730 east to Highway 12 to Pasco. He said road crews do a good job of keeping that route open.

The National Weather Service issued a winter storm warning this week for a swath from outside Fossil to Pendleton and covering the rest of northeast Oregon.

That warning means "severe winter weather conditions will make travel very hazardous or impossible."

Forecaster Rob Brooks, with the federal agency in Pendleton, said back-to-back winter storms are covering the region, with one heading north toward the Tri-Cities. That could provide a break in snowfall on Thursday, but the next weather system moves in

Friday with more snow.

"This could possibly last all the way up to Wednesday," he said.

That would be Feb. 20, more than a week away.

Snowfall at the NWS office was at 5 inches Monday at 7 a.m., but Brooks said the snow piled "way past that" before noon. Locals on social media reported as much as 10 inches in Pendleton, 11 inches in Pilot Rock and a foot of snow in Elgin. Most reported the snow still was falling when they made the measurements.

High temperatures this week will be stay in the lower 30s, and overnight lows will dip to near 20. The Weather Service also warned about avalanches for the Blue Mountains, the Elkhorns and the southern Willowa Mountains.

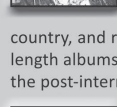
The InterMountain Education Service District at about 5:30 a.m. reported weather prompted the school districts in Pendleton and Pilot Rock to close their schools while other districts were opening late. The more the snow fell, the more schools closed. By 9 a.m., the school districts of Morrow County, Ione, Athena-Weston, Helix and Stanfield shut the doors for the day.

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OUR MUSIC FEATURING: JD KINDLE AND FRIENDS



J.D. Kindle is the middle of his fourth season as the Executive Director of the Oregon East Symphony (Pendleton, OR). He was born and raised in Pendleton to two parents who were both nurses (his father being the first male nurse at St. Anthony Hospital's ER). He graduated from Pendleton High School in 2001 and received his Associate of Arts from Blue Mountain Community College in 2003. Prior to OES, J.D. has worked as a software developer, GIS technician, agricultural laborer, and taxi driver.



Outside of his work with OES J.D. is a highly active singer-songwriter-performer in the folk, country, and rock genres. With his longtime backing band The Eastern Oregon Playboys he has released four full length albums. He is also a contributing arts and culture columnist for the East Oregonian newspaper and directs the post-internet publication project Honey Mushroom.

Fred Hill Sr. is a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and works as the Cultural Historian at Nixya'awii Community School. He is a Umatilla Language Speaker and frequent pow wow MC.

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For more information about the EO Forum, please contact: Karen Parker at 541-966-3177.

The EO Forum is a collaborative effort among leaders from Blue Mountain Community College, InterMountain Education Service District, the East Oregonian, American Association of University Women, and Harriet Isom, a former United States ambassador who also serves on the committee. This EO Forum program is offered as part of Blue Mountain Community College's annual Arts and Culture Festival. For more information on the festival go to www.blueecc.edu.