

Imbler resident arrested, charged with arson

Kael Knight faces multiple charges stemming from incidents in rural Union County

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LA GRANDE — Deputies from the Union County Sheriff’s Office arrested an Imbler resident in connection to four fires that were started in the last month in the Imbler and Summerville areas of the county.

Kael C. Knight, 19, was arrested Sept. 25 by UCSO and charged with four counts of arson II and one count of tampering with physical evidence, according to a press release from UCSO. Knight was arraigned in the Union County Superior Court the following day.

Imbler Rural Fire Chief Mike Barry said the recent string of fires seemed to be escalating toward a more public threat.

According to court documents and Barry, the first fire was on Sept. 4 on Hull Road in Imbler and destroyed a barn and a hay-



EO Media Group Photo/Dick Mason

An abandoned house on Courtney Lane in Summerville was one of four buildings damaged or destroyed in a series of fires in the Imbler and Summerville area since Sept. 4, 2019. An Imbler resident has been arrested and charged with arson in connection to the fires.

stack; a second fire at 67214 Brooks Road in Imbler was reported just after midnight on Sept. 21 and destroyed a barn built in the 1880s; a third fire at 64703 Courtney Lane in Summerville destroyed an abandoned home the evening of Sept. 21; and the fourth fire caused smoke damage and moderate structural damage

on Sept. 24 to a warehouse at 410 Railroad Ave, Imbler. Nobody was hurt in the fires. All were put out by the Imbler Rural Fire Department with help from the Elgin and La Grande rural fire departments. Knight’s bail has been set at \$250,000. He can pay 10% of it to be released under the standard release

agreement with additional regulations. Knight is to have no contact with the properties that were damaged or their owners, he has a curfew of 7 p.m. to 6 a.m., and he will be monitored by a GPS system, according to Judge Thomas Powers.

The state, represented by attorney Greg Baxter, had requested bail to be set at



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An abandoned barn built in the 1880s and a car on Brooks Road in Imbler were destroyed, and were among in a series of fires in the Imbler and Summerville area from Sept. 4, 2019, until earlier this week.

\$500,000 due to the threat they believe Knight poses to public safety. Judge Powers said because of Knight’s ties to the community, having lived in the area his entire life and having family in Elgin and La Grande, in addition to the lack of funds the currently unemployed high school student has, that amount would be unconstitutional. However, because of the escalating nature of the alleged arson, Powers set the bail above the standard \$45,000.

The counts of arson are Class C felonies, which

carry a maximum sentence of five years in jail and \$125,000 if the defendant is found guilty. Tampering with evidence is a Class A misdemeanor that carries a maximum sentence of one year in jail and a fine up to \$6,250, according to Oregon laws.

Knight has requested counsel and has until Oct. 4 at 4:30 p.m. to request a preliminary hearing. The state, should it choose to continue prosecution, has the option of bringing the case before a grand jury for an indictment.

Forecast for Pendleton Area

