

Cold: Mountain valleys could experience temperatures below zero

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and Hermiston look to be in the lower teens. Mountain valleys could experience temperatures below zero.

“It’s way below normal,” he said.

Temperatures this time of year tend to be in the upper 30s. The Weather Service predicted Pendleton and Hermiston to drop to 15 degrees Tuesday night to Wednesday morning, La Grande to reach 9 and Baker City to get as cold as 8. The unseasonable lows are due to the Arctic cold front that blew in Monday night.

“We normally don’t see that until mid to late November,” Vescio said.

The temperatures will “slowly moderate” as the week progresses, with Wednesday lows in the mid-teens, Thursday lows in the upper teens to lower 20s and the weekend temperatures reaching the mid to upper 20s. He advised locals to dress warm and prepare.

“Once the the sun goes down, it’s going to drop pretty quickly,” he said.

But the harsh wind that drove the cold front here continues to decrease and the system lacks precipitation, so no snowfall. Still, he said, the NWS is advising people to take precautions and prepare for the cold.

The weather has been so cold the Pendleton Warming Station decided to start offering Pendleton’s homeless population a place to sleep more than two weeks ahead of schedule. Dwight Johnson, the executive director of the non-profit that runs the station, said he solicited interest in



Lines of bunks in the men’s bunk room at the Pendleton Warming Station await use Tuesday afternoon. The center has beds for 26 people and opens during periods of inclement weather, including cold temperatures and severe precipitation.

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

volunteers once he saw the National Weather Service advisory that temperatures were going to plunge and wind was going to pick up.

He got enough commitments to keep the warming station open for the next few days. The warming station is located at 715 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton.

Before moving to their current location in 2016, Johnson said the warming station would only open if evening temperatures fell below 32. Now the station’s internal policy includes other factors, such as wind and precipitation, when staff are evaluating whether to open for the

night. Johnson said these conditions all contribute to an urban camper contracting hypothermia.

“(The weather is) pretty miserable if you’re not prepared for it,” he said.

With winter temperatures coming early this year, the early opening came at an inconvenient time at the facility.

Johnson said the warming station is in the midst of a kitchen remodel. Although the remodel will not affect the number of beds the warming station offers, it does mean staff will not be able to offer guests a warm meal before they go to bed most nights.

Johnson said there were about a half-dozen guests last night, but traffic could pick up once the word gets out the warming station is operating again.

After renovations are complete, Johnson said the warming station will be in good shape on the infrastructure side, but it’s still in need of volunteer personnel.

A lack of volunteers forced the warming station to close for several nights last season, which prompted some new volunteers to sign up.

Johnson said it takes five people across multiple shifts to staff the warming station each night, and the warming

station recently lost the services of a reliable volunteer.

Locals also should ready their homes for the frigid temperatures. Connie Gray with Traner’s Plumbing & Heating, Hermiston, advised folks to blow out their sprinkler lines if they have not done so and remove hoses from exterior faucets.

“If there’s water in the hose, it will freeze back into your faucet,” she said, and that could crack pipes.

Jason Kuntz, a plumber with Inland Plumbing, Hermiston, agreed and said dripping faucets can cause the same problem.

Kitchen and bathroom

water lines next to exterior walls also can freeze. Kuntz suggested keeping cabinet doors open in those cases to let warm air circulate around the pipes. And closing crawl space vents will help keep the heat inside the space.

Kuntz also said some homes in the Sandstone area of Hermiston have hoses running between the garage and into the house. Those occupants should make sure to turn off the hose valve to protect pipes and prevent a break in the attic.

Michelle Glynn is the manager of the Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter and said cold tolerance varies among pets and animals, with the thickness of their coat, body size and general health all playing roles.

“So being aware of your pet’s cold tolerance is very important,” she said.

When temperatures reach down to the 30s, she said, some dog breeds need coats and jackets. And anyone leaving a dog out overnight should make sure their pet has a warm place to huddle, such as an insulated dog house.

“My rule of thumb,” she said, “is if it’s too cold you, it’s too cold for your dog.”

Stray cats also strive to avoid the cold, and engine compartments are prime spots to stay warm. Glynn suggested a good knock on the hood before starting the engine can frighten a cat from the car.

And pet owners should be mindful of cold and icy surfaces. Pets can suffer frostbite on their paws, she said, and they can slip and break a leg on slick stairs.

Voter: Eastern Oregon voters often feel their vote won’t make a difference

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she didn’t turn in her ballot last year because she didn’t feel like she knew enough about the candidates and measures presented.

“I didn’t feel like I had enough time to get informed, and I didn’t want to vote blindly,” she said.

Last November’s ballot was packed with choices, including local, state and federal candidates and measures that would do everything from prohibiting grocery taxes to repealing Oregon’s sanctuary state status. Walker said it can be hard for the average person working full time to track down credible information for each item.

She suggested people find a trusted friend who is up to speed and ask them to explain ballot measures or candidates’ positions.

Jennifer Mack, of Athena, said she has never voted. She feels that all elections, local and national, are rigged by people “on the inside.”

“I feel like it’s just a way for people to feel like they have a choice, but really it’s all decided,” she said. “It doesn’t matter whether I vote or not, the same person is still going to win.”

She came to that belief over time as a teenager, she said, based on things she saw on the news and things she heard adults say. She has continued to have experiences where the people she



Bundles of ballots sit in trays waiting to be opened at the Umatilla County Elections office in Pendleton on Tuesday afternoon.

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

knows say they voted for one local candidate, and yet the other person was declared the winner.

“I really, truly feel it’s fixed,” she said.

Mack said she gets grief from people who tell her that people have fought for her right to vote, but she responds that those people also preserved her right to not vote — a right she plans to continue exercising.

Jose Garcia, chair of Hermiston’s Hispanic Advisory Committee, said the committee has worked hard to try to register Hermis-

ton residents to vote, but he often hears from people who flat-out refuse to register or to cast a vote, even though they are eligible to do so.

He chalked it up to a lack of trust in government.

“It goes back to some organization, some institution where they had a bad experience, or a relative suffered some consequences, and now that sense of safety is gone,” he said.

He said that can be particularly true in the Latino community, where some voters live in a heightened state of fear for friends and fam-

ily who are undocumented immigrants. Members of the Hispanic Advisory Committee worry that same distrust will cause people not to participate in the 2020 U.S. Census, another civic participation item the HAC is focused on promoting.

“It’s sad for the community that we have a pretty low turnout,” Garcia said.

In states where voting involves standing in line for a booth on Election Day, some people are kept from voting by not having transportation to the polls or not being able to take time off

work to go.

Oregon’s vote-by-mail system fixes those problems, but it sometimes creates new ones for people who don’t receive a ballot in the mail. Several people responded to a recent *East Oregonian* Facebook post by saying they would have liked to vote last year but never saw a ballot.

“For some reason, last year I never received a ballot,” Carolyn Thomas wrote. “Everyone else in my household did. Didn’t realize it until it was too late to request one, cause I am a truck driver and was not home long enough to take care of it.”

Lindell, who oversees elections in Umatilla County, said ballots are mailed out 20 days before an election, which means people should get them about 17 or 18 days before the election. Anyone who notices they haven’t received one should call the elections office at 541-278-6254 or visit oregonvotes.gov to check on their registration.

New voters must register at least 21 days before an election, but registered voters whose status has become inactivated, or are registered under the wrong address, can get that fixed. They can have a ballot mailed to them up until the Thursday before election day, or they can walk into the elections office in Pendleton and fill out a ballot in person up

until 8 p.m. on election day. In Oregon, postmarks don’t count — the ballot must arrive at the elections office by election day — so it’s better to turn one in at a drop-off site if there are only a couple of days left.

Lindell said if people have distrust in the elections process or worry it’s rigged, they are welcome to come to the elections office in Pendleton and be an official observer while ballots are being counted, or just talk with staff to find out how the process works.

She said Oregon’s vote-by-mail system makes it extremely secure against hacking by foreign governments or anyone else, as the machines that scan ballots are unconnected to the internet and backed up by physical ballots the county has in hand.

Eastern Oregon voters often feel their vote won’t make a difference when tallied against more liberal voters in the Portland metro area, but Lindell pointed out there are still local races to vote in, which often come down to a handful of votes. And in close statewide races, the turnout for Eastern Oregon voters can make a real difference.

“We need to let the rest of Oregon know how we feel,” she said. “You don’t just want to give up your vote to the rest of the state. Those results are being looked at all the time by candidates and people backing initiatives.”

Congress: Buehler announced via tweet that he’s considering a run for Congress

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U.S. House of Representatives for the first time since 2011, having dramatically flipped the chamber in the mid-term elections following President Donald Trump’s 2016 victory. Republicans vow to change that in 2020, but most political pundits consider that unlikely, with the caveat that fall 2020 is a long time away, in terms of Congressional races.

Buehler is accustomed to serving in the minority,

something he did in both terms in the Oregon House.

Jamie McLeod-Skinner, a Terrebonne Democrat who made a strong but unsuccessful run against Walden in 2018, has filed to run for the Democratic nomination to become Oregon Secretary of State. But she said Monday, in light of Walden’s announcement, that she was considering her options.

Republicans hold an 8 percentage point voter

registration edge over Democrats in the sprawling district, which covers the eastern two-thirds of the state and includes Bend, Redmond, Medford, Grant’s Pass, Hermiston, Pendleton, Klamath Falls, The Dalles and Hood River. Although Hillary Clinton won the majority of the popular vote in Oregon in November 2016, Hood River County is the only portion of the 2nd Congressional District that voted for Clinton over Trump.



EO file photo

Former Republican gubernatorial candidate Knute Buehler shakes hands with a man in the crowd during the 2018 Westward Ho! Parade in Pendleton. Buehler announced that he is considering his party’s nomination for Congress in a tweet on Tuesday morning.