



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Dave Pedrow, an employee of the city of Pendleton, hangs a large bell-shaped decoration from a light pole in the parking lot of the Pendleton Convention Center on Friday morning.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Pacific Power employees Jeffrey Garcia, left, and Mike McCormack hang a light-up holiday decoration above Main Street on Friday morning in Pendleton.

Regional banks help prevent fraud

By **KATY NESBITT**
For the East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Online banking and shopping are increasingly common ways to conduct business, but as technology gets more sophisticated, so do thieves. With the upcoming holiday season, area bank managers offer advice to keep accounts safe from fraud.

Whether a bank serves a particular community or the entire country, accounts are being monitored for irregular activity. Sandi Hainline, manager for Bank of Eastern Oregon in Heppner, said the bank has software that alerts her staff when a suspicious transaction comes through.

“We will call a customer and ask if they made the purchase,” Hainline said. “If they didn’t, we can stop the card.”

Hainline said she suggests customers alert their bank before traveling so cards aren’t needlessly put on hold when an out-of-the-area transaction raises suspicion. She also said customers can use mobi money to turn on a card before a transaction and turn it off until their next purchase to reduce the risk of someone getting ahold of an account number.

Hainline said, “With mobi money you are in control immediately of what goes through and what doesn’t.”

Attempts to buy items above a debit card’s daily limit is an indicator of a potentially

fraudulent purchase, as is a withdrawal from a bank out of the customer’s network, Hainline said.

Renae Swilling at Columbia Bank in Pendleton said her bankers are monitoring accounts all the time to make sure transactions are in the area. She, too, suggested customers let their local bank know when they are traveling. When shopping online, she said, purchase from reputable businesses and only directly through the company’s website. Sometimes an email will appear to be from a reputable company, but actually direct a customer to a site where account information is stolen.

“Fraudulent emails will ask you to re-input account or even login information, so it’s best not to open a link in an email,” Swilling said.

Fraud affects all manners of bank customers and online shoppers, but the elderly and isolated are especially preyed upon.

Chuck Detwiler at Umpqua Bank in Pendleton said the biggest problem his customers face are phone calls from people claiming the person’s Social Security number was stolen or there is a warrant for their arrest and bank account information is requested to pay “bail.” Other popular scams inform someone they’ve won the Publisher’s Clearinghouse Sweepstakes and are told they have to pay taxes on it or receive a check, and then find after

it’s deposited no funds are transferred.

“So many times people will get these checks and deposit it. They think they have money, in about 10 days they’ve spent a bunch of that money, and then they are up a creek,” he said.

A bank customer isn’t liable for the fraud, Detwiler said, but if money is spent that is never transferred into the account, they are obligated to cover the money they’ve spent.

The increasing news regarding online banking fraud has lead many to believe mailing checks is a more secure route, but Detwiler said a standard check reveals more information than a debit card.

“Every time you write a check you send all your information and they can steal your name, address, checking account and routing number as well as phone numbers,” Detwiler said. “We encourage people to use online bill pay because their checking account number isn’t even on the card.”

Detwiler said checks are easy to be forged and can be printed off a home computer. He said Umpqua Bank staff put holds on suspicious looking checks for seven to 10 days until the bank can verify the funds are legitimate.

“We tell people to be leery of people on the phone and online,” he said. “The more we tell people about fraud, the better.”

Nancy Parker earns MMC designation

ATEHNA — Adding yet another entry to her growing list of professional achievements, Athena City Recorder Nancy Parker has earned the designation of Master Municipal Clerk, which is awarded by the International Institute of Municipal Clerks, Inc.

IIMC grants the MMC designation only to those municipal clerks who complete demanding education requirements and who have a record of significant contributions to their local government, their community, and state.

Parker was presented with the 2019 President’s Award of Distinction by the Oregon Association of Municipal Recorders during the association’s annual conference in September in Bend.

“Athena can take immense pride in Nancy’s educational accomplishments and achievement of this milestone,” IIMC President Stephanie Carouthers Kelly said.

The International Institute of Municipal Clerks was founded in 1947 and has 14,000 members throughout the United States, Canada and 15 other countries.

Milton-Freewater shop completely destroyed in fire

MILTON-FREEWATER — A shop north of town burned to the ground Wednesday evening near Birch Creek Road and Humbert Lane.

Milton-Freewater Rural Fire Department firefighters responded at 2:28 p.m. to the approximately 10,000-square-foot shop, according to the department’s business administrator, Cathy Sanders.

She said six vehicles and an ambulance were on scene, with about 12 crew members. However,

BRIEFLY



Submitted photo
Athena Mayor Becky Schroeder, left, presents City Recorder Nancy Parker with her Master Municipal Clerk plaque.

the fire appeared to burn hot, she said, and firefighters couldn’t control it.

By about 4:45 p.m., they decided to call off the fight at the shop, but keep it from spreading, she said. She was unsure what was produced at the shop.

No one has been reported injured, and the cause is under investigation.

Oil industry rep sets meeting with city council

PENDLETON — The petroleum industry will be the latest group to weigh in on the Pendleton City Council’s street funding discussion.

At a meeting Tuesday, a representative from the industry will speak to the council about street funding before Public Works Director Bob Patterson does a presentation on a street maintenance report.

These discussions come a week after locals from the hotel and event promotion sectors met with the council to express their concerns with some of the proposals.

Preliminary data from a city survey shows a large event ticket fee, a

“hotel entertainment fee,” and a gas tax are the only new revenue sources that have majority support from residents.

Despite its popularity in the survey, Pendleton voters resoundingly defeated a 5-cent gas tax ballot question in 2015. A political action committee associated with the Oregon Fuels Association organized to help defeat the measure.

Beyond the issue of street funding, the council will meet earlier in the evening as the Pendleton Development Commission.

One of the issues members will tackle is a small expansion to the urban renewal district to encompass the 1910 CrossFit gym at 421 S.E. Sixth St.

In an interview Friday, Charles Denight, the associate director of the development commission, said the owner of the gym requested the group expand the urban renewal district so the building could gain access to the façade grant program.

Denight added that the commission will look into making the district expansion bigger than CrossFit’s footprint to take in a little more property.

—EO Media Group and wire services

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Midway (PG13)

12:00p* 3:10p* 6:20p 9:20p

Last Christmas (PG13)

11:50a* 2:10p* 4:30p 7:00p 9:20p

Doctor Sleep (R)

12:10p* 3:20p* 6:30p 9:40p

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WILDHORSE RESORT & CASINO

11/18

Cineplex Show Times

\$5 Classic Movie

Showing Wednesday @ 12p

North by Northwest

Ford v Ferrari (PG13)

3:30p* 6:40p 9:50p

Charlie's Angels (PG13)

4:10p 6:50p 9:30p

Midway (PG13)

3:10p* 6:20p 9:20p

Last Christmas (PG13)

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Doctor Sleep (R)

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