

## MEETINGS

## MONDAY, DEC. 23

**UMATILLA BASIN WATERSHED COUNCIL**, 6 p.m., Eastern Oregon Higher Education Center room 134, 975 S.E. Columbia Drive, Hermiston. (Michael T. Ward 541-276-2190)

**IRRIGON COMMUNITY PARKS & RECREATION DISTRICT**, 7 p.m., Irrigon Fire Station, 705 N. Main St., Irrigon. (541-922-3047)

**MORROW COUNTY HEALTH DISTRICT**, 7 p.m., Pioneer Memorial Clinic conference room, 130 Thompson St., Heppner. Provider dinner at 6 p.m., board meeting at 6:30 p.m. (Tonja Adams 541-676-2942)

**HERMISTON CITY COUNCIL**, 7 p.m., Hermiston City Hall council chambers, 180 N.E. Second St., Hermiston. (541-567-5521)

**MILTON-FREEWATER CITY COUNCIL**, 7 p.m., Milton-Freewater Public Library Albee Room, 8 S.W. Eighth Ave., Milton-Freewater. (541-938-5531)

## TUESDAY-WEDNESDAY, DEC. 24-25

No meetings scheduled

## THURSDAY, DEC. 26

**SALVATION ARMY ADVISORY BOARD**, 12 p.m., Salvation

Army, 150 S.E. Emigrant Ave., Pendleton. (541-276-3369)

**MILTON-FREEWATER LIBRARY BOARD**, 4 p.m., Milton-Freewater Public Library, 8 S.W. Eighth Ave., Milton-Freewater. (541-938-5531)

**PENDLETON ARTS COMMISSION**, 4-5 p.m., Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St., Pendleton. (Charles Denight 541-966-0233)

**UMATILLA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**, 6:30 p.m., Umatilla County Justice Center, 4700 N.W. Pioneer Place, Pendleton. (541-278-6252)

**PENDLETON PLANNING COMMISSION**, 7 p.m., Pendleton City Hall, 501 S.W. Emigrant Ave., Pendleton. (Jutta Haliewicz 541-966-0240)

## FRIDAY-MONDAY, DEC. 27-30

No meetings scheduled

## TUESDAY, DEC. 31

**MORROW COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**, 7 p.m., Port of Morrow Riverfront Center, 2 Marine Drive, Boardman. (Stephanie Loving 541-922-4624)

## Heppner grad earns McPherson College honors

East Oregonian

McPHERSON, Kan. — McPherson College, a four-year private college located in central Kansas, recognizes its highest academic achievers in its fall 2019 Honor Roll and Honorable Mention.

**Zachary Bredfield**, of Heppner, has been named to the school's honor roll for the fall semester.

To qualify for the honor roll, students must be a full-time student and earn a grade point average of 3.55 or higher during the previous term. Students earn-

ing a grade point average of 3.25 to 3.54 are named to the honorable mention.

McPherson College offers more than 20 bachelor's and pre-professional programs with curriculum that emphasizes entrepreneurship and career-focused education. It was

ranked this year by U.S. News & World Report on its "Best Colleges" list and recognized for the fifth year in a row as a "Great College to Work For" in the Chronicle of Higher Education.

Visit [www.mcpherson.edu](http://www.mcpherson.edu) to learn more about McPherson College.

## Early PG&amp;E blackouts forewarned later problems

By JUSTIN PRITCHARD AND MICHAEL LIEDTKE  
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The state senators grilling the CEO of Pacific Gas & Electric Corp. were upset — like millions of other Californians, some spent days in the dark when the nation's largest utility shut off power during windstorms this fall.

The lawmakers demanded that the executive explain why blackouts intended to prevent downed power lines from sparking deadly wildfires caused so much trouble of their own.

The explanation CEO Bill Johnson offered the Capitol hearing room: Several smaller outages that PG&E triggered in the year before its debacle began in mid-October went well, giving his company misplaced confidence.

"I think we got a little complacent that we had figured it out," Johnson testified last month.

PG&E had not figured it out.

An Associated Press review shows widespread problems with the four "public safety power shutoffs" the utility started rolling out in 2018, a year before massive blackouts paralyzed much of California in recent months. Interviews and documents obtained under public records requests reveal persistent failures and broken promises that in some cases compromised public safety.

Even as PG&E assured regulators it was fixing the problems, the utility kept making many of the same mistakes, further undermining trust after its outdated equipment and negligence has been blamed for fires that killed nearly 130 people during 2017 and 2018.

Communication, a foundation of emergency management, was poor. PG&E's notifications of impending outages were haphazard at times, with some sent after the power was already out. Telecommunications companies, water providers and emergency managers did not always receive the early word they needed.

"We were surprised that PG&E provided no advanced warning to us," an official with the city of Oroville's drinking water provider wrote state regulators about a June outage.

PG&E made important information hard to get. It was slow to distribute electronic maps showing who would lose power, making it harder for emergency responders to know exactly where to send resources. The utility also balked at providing the addresses of medically needy customers to local officials who planned to check on them in person.

Breakdowns afflicted



AP Photo/Jeff Chiu, File

In this Oct. 9, 2017, file photo, a firefighter walks near a flaming house in Santa Rosa, Calif.

even basic technology. In a region that's home to Silicon Valley and its thousands of computer programmers and engineers, PG&E had not prepared the website where it posted outage updates for a crush of customers, so it crashed. Tech experts from the state had to intervene.

The sound quality of some calls PG&E hosted during shutoffs was so poor that emergency responders and legislators had a hard time understanding updates. Even then, not everyone was invited.

"In the future, AT&T requests that it and other communications providers be included on any conference calls providing real time information," the telecommunications giant protested to regulators after the June shutoff.

These and other early failures weren't widely recognized as harbingers of the issues that would overwhelm PG&E come mid-October, partly because the outages affected rural areas with less political and economic clout.

While the headline-making shutoffs affected more than 2 million people across much of PG&E's 70,000-square-mile service territory, the four initial blackouts affected tens of thousands in Northern California's Sierra Nevada foothills and famed wine valleys. They hit in October 2018, and then in June, September and early October of this year.

Among those who saw trouble building were regulators at the California Public Utilities Commission.

The first shutoff was chaotic and the next three were not going according to the guidelines regulators had passed. Commission staff met more frequently with PG&E starting in the spring, using advice and persuasion rather than mandating changes.

"We, as the state, never got to the point where we had complete confidence in PG&E's ability to execute," said Elizaveta Malashenko, the top California regulator overseeing blackouts.

Malashenko, deputy executive director of safety and enforcement policy, told the AP that the commission

didn't act more aggressively because it has to balance punitive intervention with giving utilities a chance to self-correct.

"There needs to be some basic operational assumption that you can set up a conference call," Malashenko said.

Some critics faulted regulators for not doing enough.

The utilities commission, a sprawling bureaucracy with a complex rule-making process, was "not aggressive enough early in setting clear requirements and standards," said Melissa Kasnitz, legal director for the Center for Accessible Technology, which advocates for people with disabilities.

PG&E promised to fix a range of problems promptly, and an executive said it worked hard to deliver.

In many ways, that didn't happen. Not only did the problems continue throughout the smaller shutoffs, but they were replicated on a huge scale starting with the mid-October shutoffs.

The problems galled local officials, who vented deep frustration that a utility they often work closely with kept failing them.

After all, they are the ones dealing with a shutoff's consequences. They must dispatch ambulances, run jails and water plants, direct traffic through darkened intersections, set up community shelters and much more.

"It's almost as if it's intentional disregard of all the warnings we gave them," said Napa County Supervisor Diane Dillon, whose district north of San Francisco has experienced nearly every shutoff.

Sixteen million people — more than the population of nearly any U.S. state — depend on PG&E for power. The shutoffs were an inconvenience for some and extremely costly for others. For society's most frail, they brought questions of life and death.

Those who rely on medical devices in their homes were particularly vulnerable.

"PG&E did nothing to help us who depend on electricity to run our life support," recounted Grace Lin, a polio survivor who needs a ventilator to breathe and uses an electric wheelchair.

"It's not like we could simply grind our teeth and tough it out by holding our breath."

Lin said she was confused by the notifications PG&E sent ahead of the first shutoff that affected her San Francisco Bay Area home on Oct. 9. The company website they referred to for updates was frozen. Lin considered herself lucky that she had the means to evacuate 20 miles away, to a quadriplegic friend's house that had electricity.

PG&E could identify "medical baseline" customers, such as Lin, based on billing records. Local officials working to identify everyone who might need help repeatedly asked PG&E to share its list, so no one was overlooked.

Regulators said PG&E promised it would release medical baseline addresses during a shutoff. Yet, when each of the first four hit, PG&E insisted that locals sign a legal agreement not to disclose the addresses, causing delay and uncertainty that regulators said could risk lives.

On the eve of the first massive power outage, Malashenko was urgently emailing company officials in frustration.

"This issue has been discussed many times over the last several months" yet "has once again become an issue with PG&E," she wrote on Oct. 8.

Malashenko said state officials also pushed PG&E to improve in other areas. Starting in April, they met at least weekly with PG&E, pointing out needed improvements and stressing that aspects of the utility's preparation was inadequate.

PG&E argued that the commission's own privacy rules meant it couldn't share the addresses without a nondisclosure agreement, spokesman Jeff Smith explained. Resolving the problem took an order that the commission's executive director sent three hours before the first massive blackouts began.

Other groups of vulnerable Californians endured shutoffs without the help they needed.

"A lot of them don't have support, a lot of them don't have family," Betty Briggs, 84, said of her elderly neighbors in the well-touristed Napa Valley town of Calistoga. "It makes it very difficult, and it puts them in danger."

Briggs can get around without help, but her husband requires 24-hour care due to dementia. He lives nearby at Cedars Care Home, where seven residents in their 80s and 90s experienced three shutoffs before mid-October.

The outages created anxiety for people reliant on routine, as well as practical problems.

## DEATH NOTICE

## Charlotte L. Dack

Hermiston  
March 1, 1923 — Dec. 19, 2019

Charlotte L. Dack, 96, of Hermiston, died Thursday, Dec. 19, 2019, in Hermiston. She was born March 1, 1923, in Hereford, South Dakota. Burns Mortuary of Hermiston is in care of arrangements.

## UPCOMING SERVICES

## SATURDAY, DEC. 21

**LUISI, DON** — Graveside services at 10 a.m. at Mountain View Cemetery, 2120 S. Second Ave., Walla Walla.

**PETERSON, ERIC** — Celebration of life service with military honors at 12 noon at Maxwell Event Pavilion, 255 S. First Place, Hermiston.

**ROCK, MARTY** — Funeral service at 10 a.m. in the chapel at Burns Mortuary, 685 W. Hermiston Ave., Hermiston. Burial will follow at Desert Lawn Cemetery, Irrigon.

## SUNDAY, DEC. 22 — TUESDAY, DEC. 24

No services scheduled

## OBITUARY POLICY

The East Oregonian publishes paid obituaries. The obituary can include small photos and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge. Obituaries may be edited for spelling, proper punctuation and style.

Obituaries and notices can be submitted online at [EastOregonian.com/obituaryform](http://EastOregonian.com/obituaryform), by email to [obits@eastoregonian.com](mailto:obits@eastoregonian.com), by fax to 541-276-8314, placed via the funeral home or in person at the East Oregonian office. For more information, call 541-966-0818 or 1-800-522-0255, ext. 221.

## COMING EVENTS

## SATURDAY, DEC. 21

**SATURDAY CRAFTS**, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Hermiston Public Library, 235 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston. Drop-in craft activities for kids of all ages. Free. (Janet Torres 541-567-2882)

**STRAIGHT TALK WITH BECKY MARKS**, 2-4 p.m., The Saddle Restaurant, 2220 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton. Share thoughts with Ward I councilwoman. (541-276-9147)

**CALE MOON AND THE (F)UGLY SWEATER PARTY**, 6-11:59 p.m., The Pheasant Blue Collar Bar & Grill, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston. Cale Moon will play from 6-9 p.m. (no cover), followed by the (F) ugly Sweater Party until closing. DJ Diego will spin tunes, food and drink specials, Jell-O shots and an ugly sweater contest (trophy and prizes). Free admission. (Deanne Jensen 541-567-3022)

**IMPERIAL TWANG HOLIDAY CONCERT**, 8-11:59 p.m., Rainbow Cafe, 209 S. Main St., Pendleton. Local alt-country and rock band hosts its 14th annual holiday event. No cover.

## SUNDAY, DEC. 22

**SPECIAL NEEDS OPEN GYM**, 12:30-1 p.m., Pendleton Recreation Center, 510 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton. Free for special needs children and families. (Casey Brown 541-276-8100)

**GP CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA HOSTED BY JD KINDLE AND THE EASTERN OREGON PLAYBOYS**, 4-9 p.m., Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co., 403 S. Main St., Pendleton. Live music in a variety of genres, featuring music of the holiday season. Free. (541-276-1350)

## MONDAY, DEC. 23

**HERMISTON SENIOR MEAL SERVICE**, 12 p.m., Harkenrider Center, 255 N.E. Second St., Hermiston. Cost is \$4 for adults, free for children 10 and under, \$4 for Meals on Wheels. Extra 50 cents for utensils/dishes. Bus service available by donation. (541-567-3582)

**PENDLETON SENIOR MEAL SERVICE**, 12-1 p.m., Pendleton Senior Center, 510 S.W. 10th St., Pendleton. Costs \$3.50 or \$6 for those under 60. Pool, puzzles, crafts, snacks, Second Time Around thrift store 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For Meals On Wheels, call 541-276-1926. (Tori Bowman 541-276-5073)

**DROP-IN CRAFTS**, 1-3 p.m., Hermiston Public Library, 235 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston. Free craft activity for all ages. (Janet Torres 541-567-2882)

## TUESDAY, DEC. 24

**PRESCHOOL STORY TIME**, 10:30-11 a.m., Stanfield Public Library, 180 W. Coe Ave., Stanfield. (541-449-1254)

**BOARDMAN SENIOR MEAL SERVICE**, 12 p.m., Boardman Senior Center, 100 Tatone St., Boardman. Cost is \$4 for seniors 55 and over or \$5 for adults. (541-481-3257)

**HERMISTON SENIOR MEAL SERVICE**, 12 p.m., Harkenrider Center, 255 N.E. Second St., Hermiston. Cost is \$4 for adults, free for children 10 and under, \$4 for Meals on Wheels. Extra 50 cents for utensils/dishes. Bus service available by donation. (541-567-3582)

**PENDLETON SENIOR MEAL SERVICE**, 12-1 p.m., Pendleton Senior Center, 510 S.W. 10th St., Pendleton. Costs \$3.50 or \$6 for those under 60. Pool, puzzles, crafts, snacks, Second Time Around thrift store 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For Meals On Wheels, call 541-276-1926. (Tori Bowman 541-276-5073)

**SKILLS FOR LIFE**, 3 p.m., Pendleton Recreation Center, 510 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton. Gym activities at 3 p.m., life skills at 4 p.m. for middle and high school students. Registration requested. (Suzanne Moore 541-276-3987)

**CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS EVE PAGEANT**, 4-5 p.m., Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, 241 S.E. Second St., Pendleton. Audience participation Children's Christmas Pageant includes roles for any child that wants to participate — there is no script. Holy Communion included. Free. Everyone welcome. (Charlotte Wells 541-276-3809)

**CRAFTERNOONS**, 4:15 p.m., Pendleton Public Library, 502 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton. Drop in for a group or individual craft project. All ages. (541-966-0380)

**THE ARC ACTIVITY NIGHT**, 5:30-6:30 p.m., The ARC Umatilla County, 215 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston. Games, crafts and refreshments. (541-567-7615)

**PENDLETON EAGLES TACOS AND BINGO**, 6 p.m., Pendleton Eagles Lodge, 428 S. Main St., Pendleton. Regular packet \$10, special packet \$5. Proceeds donated to local charities. Public welcome. (541-278-2828)

**INSIDE OUTSIDE THE LINES ADULT COLORING**, 6-7:30 p.m., Irrigon Public Library, 490 N.E. Main St., Irrigon. Materials provided. Bring snacks to share. (541-922-0138)

**PENDLETON KNITTING GROUP**, 6 p.m., Prodigal Son Brewery & Pub, 230 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton. (541-966-0380)

**DIY @ THE LIBRARY**, 6-8 p.m., Pendleton Public Library, 502 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton. For teens and adults. Registration required, limited to 10. (Heather Culley 541-966-0380)

**CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE**, 6 p.m., First Christian Church, 518 S. Main St., Milton-Freewater. Celebrate Christ's birth with an evening of worship, music and fellowship. Free and open to all faiths. (Janet Collins 541-938-3854)

**STORY AND CRAFT TIME**, 6:30 p.m., Milton-Freewater Public Library, 8 S.W. Eighth Ave., Milton-Freewater. For elementary school-age children. (541-938-8247)

## WEDNESDAY, DEC. 25

No events scheduled

## THURSDAY, DEC. 26

**PRESCHOOL STORY TIME**, 10:15-11 a.m., Pendleton Public Library, 502 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton. Stories and activities for young children. (541-966-0380)