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WINNER OF THE 2020 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

\$1.50

Vaccine eligibility moves up for many Oregonians

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

received assurances that additional vaccine was coming to the state. Many parts of the state have been reporting shortages of vaccine and appointment slots for the more than 1.3 million people already eligible.

On Wednesday, March 17, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services sent a directive to all states that the May 1 date for lifting restrictions was not optional. OHA Director Pat Allen told state lawmakers the directive was “binding” and “regulatory,” with noncompliance possibly affecting the shipment of future doses

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ELIGIBILITY TIMELINE

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has ordered many of the 530,000 people covered in the next eligibility group moved up from March 29 to March 22. Here is the eligibility timeline:

March 22

- Counties that attest to largely completing the vaccination of residents 65 and older may begin vaccinating the next eligible groups.
- Vaccinations may also begin for migrant and seasonal farmworkers in counties where they are currently

already working.

March 29

- All adults 45-64 with underlying health conditions,
- Migrant and seasonal farm workers,
- Seafood and agricultural workers,
- Food processing workers,
- People living in low-income senior housing, senior congregate and independent living,
- Individuals experiencing homelessness,

- People currently displaced by wildfires,
- Wildland firefighters, and
- Pregnant people 16 and older.

April 19

- Frontline workers as defined by the CDC,
- Multigenerational household members, and
- Adults 16-44 with underlying health conditions.

May 1

- All Oregonians 16 and older

B2H

Utility project lands state support

UEC gains certificate for Boardman transmission line

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

BOARDMAN — Umatilla Electric Cooperative has been granted a key piece of support in its efforts to build a transmission line in Boardman that has drawn opposition from some property owners.

The Public Utility Commission granted UEC a certificate of public convenience and necessity on March 5. The certificate states that the 230 kilovolt overhead line, which would stretch 4.3 miles from a planned switchyard near Highway 730 to a planned substation on Olson Road near a future Amazon data center, meets the legal criteria for a “necessity for public convenience.”

If UEC isn’t able to convince all property owners involved to voluntarily sign an agreement for an easement, it can use the certificate as evidence in an eminent domain case to compel the property owners to cooperate.

In June 2020, the *East Oregonian* reported that four of the 11 landowners in question had yet to sign agreements with UEC for an easement across their property. On Friday, March 12, Umatilla Electric Cooperative CEO Robert Echenrode

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

The Pendleton Round-Up Arena sits empty on Friday, Sept. 18, 2020, on what would have been the third day of the Pendleton Round-Up.

Uncertain summer

Events around Umatilla County await word from state about regulations

By ANTONIO SIERRA
and JADE McDOWELL
East Oregonian

UMATILLA COUNTY — For some Umatilla County event organizers, there’s a sense of déjà vu.

In 2020, organizers cycled from confidence that their summer events would go on as scheduled despite the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to uncertainty as the virus spread rapidly throughout the county to resignation that they would have to cancel their events once it became clear

the state wouldn’t lift its rules on mass gatherings.

A year later, Umatilla County is experiencing declining coronavirus case numbers and is continuing to distribute the vaccine. But some organizers remain noncommittal as they await word from the state about what kind of rules they’ll have to contend with this summer.

Pendleton Round-Up studying safety plans

Umatilla County’s largest event has been fairly quiet on its 2021 plans.

When the Round-Up canceled the rodeo

for the first time since World War II, organizing quickly committed to a 2021 event.

The Round-Up website’s homepage features a counter that measures the days before Sept. 11, and a short message: “Planning is well underway for a safe and healthy 2021 Pendleton Round-Up.” Clicking on the message links to a page that explains why the Round-Up canceled the 2020 rodeo and Let ‘Er Buck Cares, a charity fund set up by the Round-Up to assist businesses and organizations affected by the rodeo’s cancellation.

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Agape House lends a helping hand in Hermiston

Officials at the nonprofit estimate it has provided supplies to 4,800 people since the month of June

By BRYCE DOLE
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Wences Dominguez makes a little more than \$400 each week pruning grapes in the

sprawling fields around Hermiston — \$350 of which he gives to his family.

He sends about \$300 to his mother, wife and sons back home in Michoacán, Mexico, where he’s been coming to and from for the past 23 years, while searching for a better future. In his first years working in the United States, he used all the money he made to build his family’s home.

The remaining \$50 he gives to his daughter. Before he came to Hermis-

ton over two years ago, he hadn’t seen her for seven years. He couldn’t get a green card, he said.

“I felt very happy,” he said of the first time he saw her again.

She has two daughters, and when the pandemic began to spread through nearby agricultural areas in the summer, they were the reason he worked hard to protect himself from COVID-19.

“Always I take care,” he said through a translator. “Always I have

my mask. For my kids.”

Dominguez and more than two dozen other migrant farmworkers recently arrived at New Horizons, a nonprofit rehabilitation organization in Hermiston. That day, however, the facility grounds served a different purpose — to provide food, clothing and personal protective equipment to the workers.

“There’s no words to describe

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OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY
CHI ST. ANTHONY HOSPITAL

FREE
DRIVE-THRU
COVID TESTING



WHAT

FREE Self-Administered COVID-19 testing.
No insurance or doctor’s order needed

WHEN

Every Monday through March 29th
9am to Noon At the Pendleton Convention Center.
SAHPENDLETON.ORG

