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## Retailers expect status quo with new ordinance

Local law requires stores to retrieve abandoned carts in a timely basis

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
*East Oregonian*

PENDLETON — A new ordinance regulating abandoned shopping carts goes into effect in Pendleton on Friday, July 30, but many retailers don't anticipate much of a change in their operations.

Marjorie Bartlett, an assistant manager at Bi-Mart, said her store already retrieves its carts whenever they are found off the premises. Dan Canale estimates he's only had to drive to pick up one of his carts five times in his seven-year tenure as a co-owner of Grocery Outlet. If a cart leaves the parking lot, he said he often finds it across the street near the Safeway recycling center.

On July 6, the Pendleton City Council approved a new local law that requires retailers with shopping carts to post return information in their stores and on their carts and retrieve abandoned carts in a timely basis or face potential fines. The goal of the new law is to put the onus of retrieving abandoned shopping carts on retailers instead of the city.

Like many of his peers at other stores, Ace Hardware manager Paul Turk said lost carts haven't been much of a problem when most customers tend to leave their carts in the facility rather than take them out into the parking lot.

But he still had some concerns. He was unclear about who would report the lost carts to the store and how long staff would have to retrieve it after they are reported. He also didn't know if the police would provide an escort to retrieve a cart if it was an unsafe location.

Pendleton Police Chief Chuck Byram said anyone can report a missing cart to a store, but the clock doesn't start until after the police notify the store. Under the ordinance, cart owners are expected to retrieve their property within 12 hours, but the city won't begin citing an owner until five calendar days pass.

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## COUNTY RECOMMENDS MASKING UP



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Registered nurse Heather McLeod enters a negative pressure room used for COVID-19 patients on Tuesday, July 27, 2021, in the medical/surgical unit at CHI St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton. As of that morning, the hospital had seven COVID-19 cases, according to hospital spokesperson Emily Smith.

## Move aligns with feds amid COVID-19 surge

By BRYCE DOLE  
*East Oregonian*

PENDLETON — Less than a month after Oregon lifted nearly all pandemic mandates, Umatilla County residents once again are being asked to mask up in public indoor settings to curb the spread of COVID-19.

In a statement, Umatilla County Public Health aligned with recent recommendations from the state and federal government that everybody, including fully vaccinated people, should wear masks indoors "due to a substantial increase in Umatilla County's COVID-19 case rate."

"What we're seeing from

the delta variant supports that more spread is happening," said Umatilla County Public Health Director Joe Fiumara. "While masks do not stop all spread, they do help limit it."

### Umatilla County has state's highest case rate

On Tuesday, July 27, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced the mask recommendations and called for teachers, staff, students and school visitors to wear masks regardless of their vaccination status or how much the virus is spreading through communities. However, health experts maintain that vaccinations remain the public's best bet to curb the spread of the virus.

The CDC says people should wear masks indoors if they live in areas where

case rates exceed more than 50 new cases per 100,000 residents for the past week, or if more than 8% of tests are positive for that same period.

The Oregon Health Authority does not publish case rates over seven days in its weekly metrics, but a report on July 26 shows that, from July 11-22, Umatilla County saw a case rate of 504 new cases per 100,000 people — by far the highest in the state.

During that same period, 17.6% of all tests came back positive, the second highest in Oregon, just behind Morrow County's 17.9%.

The move back to masking was prompted by a national increase in COVID-19 cases driven by the highly infectious delta variant, which is tearing through unvaccinated communities. It's a dismay-

ing sign to health experts that the pandemic has yet to abate, as cases and hospitalizations ramp up to levels that rival last winter's surge.

"At this point, you're either going to get the virus or you're going to get vaccinated," Fiumara said. He added that masks are a "tool that we can use to try to not overload the hospitals and — not to be too blunt — not end up with a whole bunch of dead people."

OHA reported two new COVID-19 deaths in Umatilla County on July 28, raising the county's death toll to 94.

One victim was a 33-year-old man with underlying health conditions who tested positive and died on July 24 at Kadlec Regional Medical Center, Richland, Washington. The other was a 90-year-old woman who

tested positive July 23 and died July 27. The state has yet to confirm where she died and if she had underlying conditions.

"The mask is not about protecting yourself," Fiumara said. "The mask is about protecting those you interact with."

The recommendations come as Umatilla County reports one of the largest COVID-19 case spikes in Oregon, with about 8% of the state's total cases over the past two weeks despite accounting for just 2% of its population. The county's case rate during that same time period was more than seven times higher than Multnomah and Washington counties, which each have more than 500,000 more residents than Umatilla County.

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# Solving the dryland puzzle

Researchers seek efficiency, want to tap into carbon credit market

By GEORGE PLAVEN  
*Capital Press*

PENDLETON — Experimental plots of wheat unfold across the Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center like a patchwork quilt of amber and gold.

Christina Hagerty, an assistant professor of cereal pathology at the station 7 miles north of Pendleton, walked through the fields on an early July morning

pointing out various trials — everything from tests of new wheat varieties to new techniques for managing weeds and diseases.

Each trial could ultimately impact farmers' bottom lines. "As researchers, we need to lose our shirt before the farmer does," Hagerty said.

The purpose of the center, commonly known as CBARC, is to improve dryland farming practices in a region that receives



George Plaven/Capital Press

Christina Hagerty, a plant pathologist at the Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center, Adams, serves as one of the project leaders for the station's Resilient Dryland Farming Appropriation.

little precipitation. Research funded by two new congressional appropri-

ations will help the center's scientists from Oregon State University and the USDA

Agricultural Research Service unlock the secrets of dryland farming and its impacts on climate change.

One appropriation seeks to develop dryland farming techniques that can improve soil health and save farmers money by requiring less fertilizer, herbicides and other inputs.

The other is to study soil carbon sequestration and the overall carbon footprint of dryland farms in the region — critical information to determine whether growers can profit from participating in future carbon markets.

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