



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group/La Grande Observer

**Oregon National Guard Spc. Renay Monohan sanitizes and cleans a procedure room on Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021, in the surgicenter at Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande. Monohan is a local to La Grande, and works as a health care medic as her regular job with the U.S. Forest Service. National Guard members have been activated at a number of hospitals in Eastern Oregon following a surge of COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations.**

## National Guard activated at Eastern Oregon Hospitals

By ALEX WITTWER  
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — National Guard members have finally arrived at many Eastern Oregon hospitals as the COVID-19 pandemic reaches its apex in recent cases caused by the virulent delta variant.

Saint Alphonsus Medical Center, Baker City, Wallowa Memorial Hospital, Enterprise, and Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande, each had citizen-soldiers deployed to help, in addition to the guard members already deployed at Blue Mountain Hospital, John Day.

At least 20 guard members were deployed to assist in operations at hospitals in nonclinical roles. The hospitals moved to fill in gaps with the National Guard soldiers, placing them in positions throughout the hospitals as ancillary support staff. Staff at the overburdened health care centers more than welcomed the added support for roles such as front door screeners, which clinical staff often had filled.

“That helps us be able to deploy our clinical people back to clinical work,” said Priscilla Lynn, president and chief nursing officer at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Baker City.

Freeing up resources for the health care staff improves efficiency during a time when worker shortages abound across nearly every industry, and when nurses and other clinical staff have been working tirelessly during an unrelenting 18 months of fighting a pandemic.

“All of the entry level positions across our county — it’s difficult to fill those positions, and we’re experiencing that same thing,” Lynn said. “We’ve had staff out, difficult to fill-in positions that are open for a really long time. So having the guard here (means) the staff is getting a little reprieve. The staff is really grateful. We’ve had an exhausted crew.”

Blue Mountain Hospital District in Grant County was one of the first places where the National Guard was activated after Gov. Kate Brown’s emergency



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

**National Guard Spc. Pamela Fredrick cuts up portions of braised beef Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021, in the kitchen at Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande. Fredrick is a recent graduate of Eastern Oregon University, having earned her bachelor’s degree in communications. National Guard members have been activated at a number of hospitals in Eastern Oregon following a surge of COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations.**

order set in motion a surge of nearly 1,500 citizen-soldiers in support of health care workers and hospitals. The first 500 were deployed near the middle of August, while the remaining 1,000 were set to be deployed and activated in the following weeks.

Grande Ronde Hospital welcomed 10 National Guard members on Monday, Sept. 13, to help support operations, according to the hospital. Many of the recently activated soldiers were La Grande locals, including National Guard Spc. Pamela Fredrick, an immigrant from Micronesia, who recently earned her degree in communications at Eastern Oregon University.

“I’m always ready whenever we get called in,” she said. “We were told beforehand that this might happen.”

Fredrick, whose job title in the National Guard is culinary specialist, found herself at home in the kitchen at the hospital, working alongside hospital staff and fellow guardsman Spc. Jacob Jensen. Upstairs in the surgical center, Spc. Renay Monohan, of La Grande, assisted with the environmental crew by sanitizing and cleaning a procedure room.

In addition to the support through the National Guard, some hospitals have received a boost in clinical staff through various programs, such as SERV-OR, which allocate nurses and clini-

cians across the country.

SERV-OR features a roster of medical workers such as physicians, nurses and emergency medical technicians who signed up as volunteers to assist health care centers during the heightened infection rate of COVID-19 across the state.

“We have a hero in our midst,” Lynn said. “We did get a nurse through the SERV-OR program who has been working some shifts and has a few shifts left in a volunteer staff. Super grateful for that amazing nurse. We also requested through the OHA processes for travel nurses. Nursing staff are expected. We have a couple starting (Sept. 14) and expect a few more to trickle in through the week.”

Additionally, Grande Ronde Hospital is expected to bolster their health care force through a traveling nurse program, according to Mardi Ford, director of communications and marketing at the hospital.

Wallowa Memorial Hospital also received two National Guard members on Sept. 13 who will serve as front door screeners, according to Brooke Pace, director of communications and public relations at the hospital. Additionally, the hospital is also receiving support through two additional nurses staffed through a program called Favorite Healthcare Staffing, a traveling nurse program.



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

**National Guard Spc. Jacob Jensen dices up tomatoes Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021, in the kitchen at Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande. Jensen, a La Grande local, works as an electrical engineer. National Guard members have been activated at a number of hospitals in Eastern Oregon following a surge of COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations.**

## Man trapped in Hermiston crash requires emergency medical flight

By BRYCE DOLE  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — A Hermiston man required an emergency flight Sept. 5 after being pinned under a car in an early-morning crash.

According to public safety records, the crash occurred near Southeast Sixth Street and East Highland Avenue when a 2014 Toyota pickup hit a parked vehicle and rolled onto its side, trapping a 36-year-old man.

Tasha Rasco, a Hermiston resident, said she and her boyfriend were returning home from a trip to 7-Eleven when they saw a few men running over to the crashed pickup to try and push it over. She said she heard somebody yelling that a person was trapped and wasn’t responding.

Rasco and her boyfriend rushed to help the men try to push the vehicle over and free the man. Another man was standing beside the pickup covered in blood and crying, saying that it was his boyfriend trapped and unconscious inside the truck.

“It was terrifying,” Rasco said. “I had a bunch

of emotions. I didn’t know if he was going to be OK. I felt horrible for everybody involved and was just hoping the ambulance would get there before he didn’t make it.”

The man outside the vehicle, Rasco said, crawled back through the window and tried to give his boyfriend CPR. He then tried to move his boyfriend through the top window, but he was too heavy, so they couldn’t get him out. Rasco said she then saw the trapped man attempt to pull his pants up.

She thought to herself, “Oh my God, he’s alive.”

Umatilla County Fire District 1 responded to the scene shortly before 4 a.m. and arrived to find a large crowd around the wreckage, documents show.

The man told firefighters his boyfriend was trapped and they needed to help him. According to the fire district’s documents, he said they were coming back from a party in separate vehicles when the crash occurred.

Hermiston police later identified this man as Parker Steck, a 26-year-old resident of Snohom-

ish, Washington. Police determined that Steck was driving the vehicle and conducted a blood and alcohol test, which showed a blood-alcohol level of .14%, documents show, almost twice the legal limit of .08%. Police arrested Steck on counts of driving under the influence of intoxicants, reckless driving and endangering another person.

Officials used equipment to cut the vehicle open and free the man inside. Emergency medical services strapped him to a gurney and treated him before moving him to a helicopter that had landed in the parking lot of a nearby Safeway then flew him to Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland, Washington, documents show.

Rasco said she stayed up all night searching the internet and social media for the man’s family. She found several phone numbers online, but they were all disconnected. She found their profiles on Facebook, but she was unable to get in touch with his family.

Police reported the 36-year-old man was released from the hospital that day.

### LOCAL BRIEFING

#### COVID-19 death toll rises in region

PENDLETON — Umatilla County has reported five COVID-19 deaths over the past week, raising its pandemic death toll to 123. And neighboring Morrow County on Tuesday, Sept. 14, reported its 21st COVID-19 death.

Umatilla County has so far reported 21 COVID-19 deaths that occurred in August, tying the county’s pandemic record for deaths reported in a single month, which was set in July 2020.

The latest disclosure comes as the county reports 58 new COVID-19 cases. The county has reported more than 400 cases for seven consecutive weeks, a total that dwarfs all previous pandemic surges and has been driven by the highly infectious delta variant, health officials say.

Umatilla County’s 119th victim is a 73-year-old man who tested positive Aug. 20 and died Aug. 30 at Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston. He had unspecified underlying health conditions, the county reported.

The county’s 120th victim is a 86-year-old man who tested positive Aug. 16 and died Sept. 3 at Providence St. Mary’s Medical Center in Walla Walla. He had unspecified underlying health conditions, the county reported.

The county’s 121st victim is a 72-year-old man who tested positive Aug. 18 and died Aug. 30 at PeaceHealth Sacred Heart in Springfield.

County health officials have yet to determine if he had underlying health conditions.

The county’s 122nd victim is a 56-year-old woman who tested positive Aug. 13 and died Sept. 2 at St. Luke’s, Boise. He had unspecified underlying health conditions.

The county’s 123rd victim is an 83-year-old man who tested positive Aug. 31 and died Sept. 12 at Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston. County health officials have yet to determine if he had underlying health conditions.

Morrow County’s latest victim is an 80-year-old man who tested positive Aug. 24 and died Sept. 3 at Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston. He had unspecified underlying health conditions.

The disclosure comes as the county reported 14 new COVID-19 cases.

#### Economic summit postponed until June 2022

HERMISTON — The Eastern Oregon Economic Summit has been postponed until June 2022 due to the continued surge of the delta variant of COVID-19 and to facilitate full participation by attendees, panelists and speakers.

The new dates are June 16-17, 2022, at Hermiston High School, with industry tours scheduled for Thursday, June 16, and Summit events on Friday, June 17.

“The Economic Summit is an important opportunity for our region to showcase the growth and opportunities we’re experiencing, and to invite leaders from around the state to learn more about what we have going on and where our challenges lie,” said Bobby Levy, president of the Eastern Oregon Women’s Coalition and Representative of Oregon House District 58. “The board and our partners decided it would be better to put our full effort into an event everyone can attend in 2022.”

The agenda and area tours will remain the same, with a focus on water, housing, forestry and economic development. Tickets will automatically be transferred to the new dates, and more information will be coming about hotel reservations made at the Holiday Inn with the event code.

The two-day Eastern Oregon Economic Summit is an opportunity for private and public sector leaders from throughout Oregon to learn about the growth and potential of Eastern Oregon’s economy. Speakers include industry experts and state and federal lawmakers.

The Summit features field and industry tours, general session speakers, and breakout panels focused on federal and state legislative updates, programs, economic trends, and more.

— EO Media Group

## ATTENTION LET'ER BUS TRANSIT RIDERS AND PENDLETON ROUND-UP FANS.

The City of Pendleton’s public transportation bus rides will be on a “Round-Up” schedule for the week of Round-Up, starting Saturday, September 11th and running through Saturday, September 18th. During Round-Up week, buses will operate in the afternoons and evenings for the Saturday night concert, Happy Canyon and other evening events. There will be no morning bus routes.

The routes will focus on runs between hotels, downtown and the Roundup Grounds. The Round-Up bus route and schedule information will be posted online at [pendleton.or.us/finance/page/transportation](http://pendleton.or.us/finance/page/transportation)

Please remember to “mask up” when riding public transportation.



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**Cry Macho (PG13)**  
1:30p 4:50p 8:10p

**Copshop (R)**  
1:50p 5:10p 8:30p

**Malignant (R)**  
1:00p 4:10p 7:30p

**Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings (PG13)**  
1:10p 4:30p 7:50p

**Free Guy (PG13)**  
12:50p 4:00p 7:20p

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