

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

ANDREW CUTLER
Publisher/Editor

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Owner

ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Editor/Senior Reporter

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2021

Founded October 16, 1875

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OUR VIEW

When the state faces its own mandates

We have from the start advised those old enough and medically able to be vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus. We have also pressed employers to take reasonable steps to protect their employees, and that everyone take whatever steps they believe necessary to protect themselves.

We are firmly in the anti-COVID-19 camp.

We have been critical of many government regulatory actions related to the pandemic, particularly those borne of sweeping emergency executive orders that have escaped legislative review.

Almost from the start, the state governors imposed strict rules on businesses and employers, and sent out regulators to force compliance.

The state of Oregon found out recently how hard it is to enforce its own mandates.

After a one-year hiatus, the Oregon State Fair returned this year with the theme "Fun makes a comeback." Maybe a little too much fun, at least for some patrons.

Late last month, Gov. Kate Brown mandated that masks be worn in public settings, indoors and outdoors, at large gatherings such as the fair and the Pendleton Round-Up. The fair, a public corporation, is a government entity that operates under the authority of state statute. The state owns the fairgrounds and the facilities on the grounds. Oregon State Police patrol the fair.

Several news outlets reported Oregon OSHA received at least a dozen complaints that mask rules were not enforced on the fairgrounds. Photos posted on social media indicate widespread flouting of the governor's rules.

"We are adding steps. Over the weekend, we talked with Oregon OSHA, and they will be visiting the fair on their time frame," Oregon State Fair spokesperson Dave Thompson told KOIN. "They will be looking specifically at the vendors and staff and the people we do have some control over and make sure they're wearing masks. Vendors could be fined thousands of dollars."

OSHA was sent to hold vendors to the rules, but not to make the fair enforce the rules on its patrons. Ejecting noncompliant fairgoers would have been hard, unpopular and not much fun.

Ag employers can empathize. They have, in effect, been turned into agents of the state. If they fail to comply with the rules, or are thwarted by uncooperative employees or customers, they can be heavily fined by the state.

In an ideal world, the experiences of an actual agent of the state with enforcing state diktats would inform regulators to the practical problems of compliance and ameliorate their attitudes toward good faith efforts put forth by the regulated.

Alas, the world is far from ideal.



The dangers of blowing dust



MARC AUSTIN
EYE IN THE SKY

As of Sept. 1, we've officially entered meteorological fall. After a brutally hot and dry summer, we're gradually starting to enter a more mild and pleasant time of year across the Pacific Northwest.

Chilly mornings and mild afternoons with occasionally breezy to windy days are a common occurrence this time of year, making it one of the best seasons for heading out to enjoy some fresh air. But there is one thing that can be a downright nuisance this time of year, in fact, it can be deadly depending on its severity. It's blowing dust and it's as common to the Columbia Basin as tumbleweeds.

After a long hot summer with months of dry conditions, many of the fields across the basin lie barren with thousands of possible acres of flat land with light fine soils. As the frequency of frontal passages increases this time of year, we can get pretty windy from time to time, and as these winds interact with the dry fine soils, they are often lofted

into the air with expansive areas of blowing dust. If the dust is sufficiently dense, dust storms can occur, resulting in rapid reductions in visibility and air quality.

One of the most tragic dust storms occurred on Sept. 25, 1999, when significant blowing dust moved across Interstate 84 between Pendleton and Hermiston. The rapid onset of near zero visibility led to a fatal multi-car pileup along the interstate, killing eight people. Less severe incidents occur on a nearly annual basis somewhere in the Columbia Basin with major traffic slowdowns and fender benders.

So while this time of year is nice, it's important to pay attention to weather conditions especially if you plan to travel. If it's going to be windy and we haven't had a recent rain event, you can bet there's going to be some blowing dust, even if only locally from a handful of fields.

So what should you do if you encounter a dust storm? Well if you can see it in the distance and can avoid driving into it, either stop until conditions improve or find an alternate route that isn't affected. If you can't avoid it and wind up in a dust storm, pull your vehicle off the pavement as far as possible. Stop the car, turn off the lights, set the emer-

gency brake and take your foot off of the brake pedal to be sure the tail lights are not illuminated.

Tail lights can lure other vehicles toward you, making it more likely they may run into yours. If you can't pull off the roadway, proceed at a speed suitable for visibility. Turn on your lights and sound the horn occasionally. Use the painted centerline to help guide you until you can find a safe place to pull off the road. Never stop on the traveled portion of the roadway as this is what often leads to multi-vehicle accidents.

Of course, the best solution is to remain aware of your surroundings, especially on very windy days while traveling in areas that are prone to blowing dust.

So go about enjoying your fall. It's a remarkable time of year to get outside. Just remember these safety tips if and/or when you encounter blowing dust while traveling.

Marc Austin is a warning coordination meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Pendleton. Austin leads outreach and weather preparedness programs, and engages the media, emergency management and public safety communities in building a weather ready nation.

YOUR VIEWS

Time to wise up and take drastic climate action

Mary Edward's letter (Urgent action required to save Pacific Northwest salmon, Sept. 9) urging immediate action to protect Oregon's failing salmon populations from the ravages of global warming is spot on. She calls for federal infrastructure appropriations to support investments in the Columbia Basin benefiting salmon and other wildlife.

Another helpful solution is to encourage the repopulation of our public-land watersheds by beaver — and it wouldn't need any federal appropriations. It would cost nothing.

Halting commercial and recreational beaver hunting and trapping on federal public lands would free these industrious hydraulic engineers to increase their numbers and reoccupy former habitat throughout vital watersheds, thus cooling water, reducing sediment, alleviating rapid run-off, storing water and raising water-levels, providing shelter and refuges for immature salmon, steelhead and other aquatic species. The positive changes in riparian habitats would increase biodiversity and the food base for birds, fish and other wildlife and would be fire resistant.

All these benefits would come at no cost to the taxpayer.

The number of beaver trappers and hunters in Oregon averages less than 200 each year, but according to Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife figures

(through 2016), they kill between 1,600 and 3,200 beaver per year (and this during the breeding/nurturing season), and that is enough to suppress population growth and slow down their spread. ODFW has repeatedly resisted any significant restrictions on beaver trapping and hunting on federal public lands, most recently this year.

It's obvious the climate changes in the West are dire. It's time to wise up and take drastic action — or else.

Wally Sykes
Joseph

Stop B2H still alive and fighting against power line

The East Oregonian's recent reporting ("Boardman Coal Plant decommissioning moves along," Thursday, Sept. 2) gave the impression that the STOP B2H Coalition has met its demise.

This is incorrect. We are alive and well and fighting for all Eastern Oregonians' rights and quality of life. What was reported was a skirmish on issues regarding an appeal of summary determinations and questioning the administrative law judge's competency. Neither were issues brought up by the Stop B2H Coalition.

There are still 57 issues and 24 people that will be presenting their written arguments on Sept. 17 to the administrative law judge for the Energy Facility Siting Council in the Oregon Department of Energy contested case. These issues include protecting our

viewsheds, parks, forests, soils, fish and unchecked weed growth from road construction. Besides enforcing noise standards that Idaho Power and the state want to eliminate, and keeping large construction equipment and traffic away from our neighborhoods, there is the biggest one of all — preventing devastation from forest fires.

Idaho Power wants to ring the Grande Ronde Valley with large transmission towers that will be visible from the entire valley. They will be seen as one drives on Interstate 84. They will go through Morgan Lake and the Ladd Marsh Wildlife areas and they will be placed directly in front of the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Baker County.

Meanwhile, Idaho Power is rich with renewable energy at home in Idaho, with more coming online in the coming years. They have all the energy they need in Idaho regardless of the season. Instead, they would rather pillage Oregon's resources and land to maximize their profits for their shareholders. Because they are a regulated monopoly they'll make 7.6% profit for every penny spent. The \$1.2 billion transmission line (2016 dollars) is more expensive than building renewables and your energy bills (whether Idaho Power or Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative) will ultimately reflect this.

We need to, and will, stop this unnecessary transmission line.

Jim Kreider
co-chair, Stop B2H Coalition

EDITORIALS

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

LETTERS

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SEND LETTERS TO:

editor@eastoregonian.com,
or via mail to Andrew Cutler,
211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801