# EAST OREGONIAN

## LIGHTING UP THE NEW YEAR

Fireworks explode over the Festival of Lights in the early minutes of Saturday, Jan. 1, 2022, to ring in the new year at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, Hermiston.

Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

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# COLD, WET and WINDY

## Winter storm leads to closures of roads, schools, state offices

By ANTONIO SIERRA
*East Oregonian*

**U**MATILLA COUNTY — If the early parts of the cold weather season were relatively mild, winter came back with a vengeance at the end of 2021 and into the early days of 2022.

Significant snowfall was followed by subzero temperatures and gusts as high as 50 mph that created hazardous conditions in some parts of Umatilla County.

Pendleton on Thursday, Dec. 30, had a low of 10 degrees, according to data from the National Weather Service in Pendleton. But on Dec. 31, the low dropped to minus 7, the coldest temperature of the month and 3 degrees shy of the coldest temperature on that date set back in 1978.

Jan. 1 reached a low minus 5 in Pendleton, but that was 7 degrees warmer

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Photos by Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

An Oregon Department of Transportation truck Monday, Jan. 3, 2022, blocks Highway 11 near its intersection with Highway 331. State and county roads were closed in much of Eastern Oregon due to winter weather.

An abandoned car sits in a snow drift along Mann Road on Monday, Jan. 3, 2022, near Adams.

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# COVID-19 infections on the rise

## Umatilla County has the third highest weekly average, just more than 402 cases

By GARY A. WARNER
*Oregon Capital Bureau*

SALEM — Oregon is in the midst of a sixth wave of COVID-19 infections as the world marked the two-year anniversary of the pandemic on Friday, Dec. 31.

The Oregon Health Authority report on Dec. 30 recorded 2,948 new cases and 15 deaths. Hospitalizations for COVID-19 climbed to 440 people, up 21 from Dec. 29.

Oregon has recorded 421,263 infections and 5,655 deaths from COVID-19, which was first reported in China two years ago Dec. 31. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 488,000 new cases nationwide, a new record. The World Health Organization said new infections were a "tsunami" sweeping the globe.

The Dec. 30 report said the seven-day daily average of new cases in Oregon rose to 1,532. The per capita rate is 251.3 cases per 100,000.

Deschutes County continues to be the state's leading COVID-19 hot spot, with the top infection rate of any county when adjusted for population. Deschutes County has a weekly average of 565.4 cases per 100,000 residents. Sparsely populated Grant County has a

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# Kentucky firefighter finds new home in Pendleton

By ANTONIO SIERRA
*East Oregonian*

PENDLETON — Manny Kirkland was in the middle of telling his life story when he had to cut himself off: There was an emergency he needed to respond to.

For the past six months, Kirkland, a firefighter and paramedic with the Pendleton Fire Department, has been responding to the city's emergencies at the drop of the hat. After tending to the call for service and then fitting in a training session, Kirkland was ready to finish his story about how someone from Kentucky ended up in the Round-Up City.

Kirkland first grew interested in firefighting and emergency response as a teenager, he said, when he noticed the way a friend

of the family was acting after retiring from the Lexington Fire Department in Kentucky.

"There was almost a sadness about retiring," he said.

The fact the friend found the job of firefighting so compelling that he was sad to end his career was compelling to Kirkland, but he put that dream on hold while he worked in his family's catering business. It wasn't the most direct route to firefighting, but Kirkland found a tongue-in-cheek throughline.

"The flip side is firefighters love to eat," he said.

Like so many Eastern Oregon transplants, Kirkland's journey to the region was made possible through family.

While Kirkland grew up in the

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Manny Kirkland, a firefighter and paramedic with the Pendleton Fire Department, poses for a portrait Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2021, at Pendleton Fire Station No. 1. He moved to Pendleton in 2021 from Kentucky with his wife, Amity Kirkland, who grew up in Union.