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COVID-19

Infections expected to rise with new version of omicron

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — An upswing in COVID-19 cases in Oregon is expected to hit this week, driven by infections of the hyper-contagious BA.2 version of the omicron variant, according to a new state report.

The forecast from the Oregon Health & Science University shows a much lower peak for the new wave of cases, topping out at under 300 hospitalizations per day in the

first week of May, then resuming a downward trend until reaching current levels again by late June.

"The primary forecast shows a slight increase in hospitalized patients as the impacts of BA2 and reduced COVID restrictions are experienced," said the report written by Dr. Peter Graven, the chief COVID-19 forecaster at OHSU.

The forecast is part of the mixed medical and political signals around the nation as the omicron surge that began in late November

and peaked in mid-January has rapidly dropped to levels not seen since before the delta variant spike began at the end of June 2021.

As of Friday, March 25, the statistics in Oregon showed a precipitous drop-off. The Oregon Health Authority on March 25 reported 189 new cases of COVID-19 and two deaths. Oregon hospitals reported 157 patients with COVID-19, down four from the day before. There are 26 patients with COVID-19 in

intensive care units, up one from Thursday's report.

Positive test results — a key indicator of future growth of the virus — were at 2.5%, down from the high point of 22.6% in mid-January. OHA has said throughout the pandemic that a rate of 5% or under was manageable for health care providers.

The pandemic in Oregon reached two milestones during the last week, passing 7,000 deaths and 700,000 cases. As of March 25,

there have been 7,035 deaths and 702,750 reported infections.

The expected rise in cases is due to two factors, one expected, but the other an unwelcome surprise.

Even before the official lifting of indoor face mask requirements, compliance with safeguards was waning. OHSU forecasters said a slowing of the drop in cases was likely as more people became exposed.

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PENDLETON

FAA: Amazon drone crashed twice in 2021

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Package delivery drones being tested at the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range crashed a couple of times last year, but the city of Pendleton is remaining quiet about the details surrounding the incidents.

Business Insider obtained reports from the Federal Aviation Administration that documented crashes on the Pendleton range in May and June of 2021. In the latter instance, the unmanned vehicle fell 160 feet, its battery catching fire after hitting the ground.

"Several acres of wheat stubble field were soon on fire," the report states, according to Business Insider.

The May crash involved Amazon's MK27 drone falling to the ground after a propeller failure.

An Amazon spokesperson told Business Insider that no one was hurt in either incident

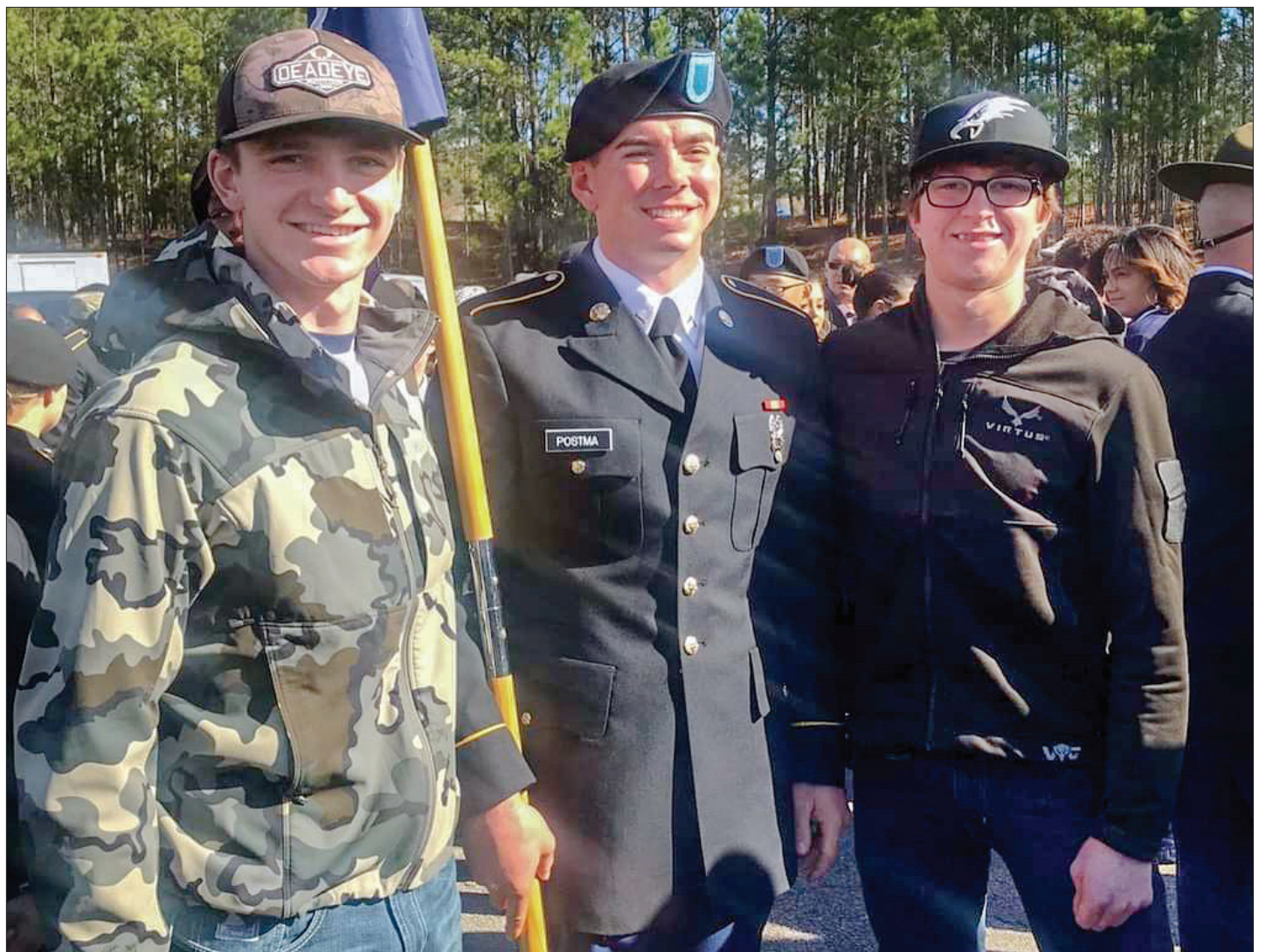
"We follow thorough procedures on how flight tests are conducted and how we respond to any incident," the spokesperson said in a statement. "In this instance, we carried out a test with the utmost caution, as is normal in the aviation industry. No employee or community member was at risk and the team followed all appropriate safety procedures and reporting requirements."

In a Friday, March 25, interview, Pendleton Range Manager Darryl Abling confirmed the crashes but said he could provide no other details about the incidents. Abling said it's against the drone range's policy to discuss crashes and other incidents. Since the range's customers are the groups that witness the crashes, Abling said he would be speculating if he commented on them.

Abling said the testing range tracks all operations, including crashes, but he declined to disclose them since they aren't public record.

At the urging of the city of Pend-

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Mary Otteson/Contributed Pphoto

Longtime friends Cody Watson, Braydon Postma and Kyler Carter pose for a photo after Watson and Carter surprised Postma at his bootcamp graduation in January 2019.

Cold night in the canyon

Death leaves a gap: 'Nothing will ever replace him'

Editor's Note: This is the second of a two-part feature. Part one ran in the East Oregonian in print and online Saturday, March 26.

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

PILOT ROCK — Braydon Postma and Cody Watson lay on their backs on a bed of cold river rock. Postma had a broken leg, pelvis and arm. Watson's leg was shattered.

The two men and their friend Kyler Carter had fallen about 50 feet from a swimming hole above a waterfall and landed in the shallow, rocky creek bed

below. As dusk turned to dark, they talked. Their rescue, they realized, was not assured.

Carter, with injuries to his lungs and the loss of his eyeglasses, had gone for help.

"Cody and I didn't know if Kyler had internal injuries or something," Postma said. "As much faith as we had in him to do it, we didn't know if he'd make it."

The men, not able to move and separated by the creek, realized their situation was dire. They concentrated about what was important.

"We talked about family," Postma said. "We said we loved each other. Cody talked a lot about how he loved his mom

and his brothers and sister. He talked about how much he loved his friends, and Kaybob and me."

"Kaybob" was their nickname for Carter.

At one point, Watson half-joked that it was so cold from waterfall mist that he wished he could come over and snuggle. Both men cracked up.

After the sun rose high enough to shine into the canyon and warm the air, they decided to close their eyes.

"Let's just get some sleep while we can," Postma remembered Watson saying. "I think that was the last thing he said."

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Pendleton World War II guardhouses under threat

Airport commission again questions what to do with structures 80-plus-years old

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The elements, construction traffic and neglect threaten two guardhouses dating back to World War II at what was then the Pendleton Field Army Air Base.

They've gone largely unmaintained for decades at Airport Road. What to do with them has become



Phil Wright/East Oregonian

The construction area of the new Radisson Hotel on Sunday, March 27, 2022, encroaches on the guardhouses from World War II at the airport in Pendleton. Some are again calling for the preservation of the historic structures.

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