

NWS on watch for high temperatures next week

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Sweltering weather is liable to return to the Columbia Basin area next week, according to the National Weather Service's long-range forecast. And the city of Pendleton is having construction work start earlier in the day to avoid the heat of summer.

"It's a little too early to estimate the probability of temperatures over 105 degrees," Pendleton NWS meteorologist Rob Brooks said, "but we're watching and might issue an alert."

The NWS forecasts highs in the 90s in Pendleton for the rest of this week and Sunday, July 24, then getting hotter from July 25. Its prediction for July 26 is 102 degrees and probably higher on July 27.

For Hermiston, the NWS forecasts sunny and hot, with a high near 105 for July 26, 102 at Boardman and 103 at Pasco and Milton-Freewater. July 27 is likely to be hotter in these areas as well.

The NWS predicted overnight lows in the 60s, but also higher on Wednesday.



Yasser Marte/East Oregonian

A construction crew Wednesday, July 20, 2022, works on curbs and gutters on Southeast Third Street and Goodwin Avenue in Pendleton. The city announced it will have some crews start work earlier in the day to avoid hot summer days.

The Weather Service's July 20 forecast discussion described the meteorological conditions for multi-day triple-digit temperatures.

On July 25 the upper level ridge baking the southwest states will squeeze northward into the area between a trough over the northern Rockies and an upper low off the coast, the

discussion said. This would begin the excessive heat expected to start July 26.

There is a slight chance for cooler temperatures, but the most likely outcome is for more than 105 degrees in lower elevations July 26 and 27.

"Depending on how the models evolve in the coming

days, temperatures may need to be adjusted upward for Tuesday and Wednesday," the guidance concluded. "Heat health impacts may become an issue by Tuesday given the current temperature forecasts."

The city of Pendleton announced some of its construction crews will

begin working at 6 a.m. because of high temperatures in the summer months. These work weeks will be based on weather forecasts for temperatures at or above 90 degrees. Otherwise work crews will start at 7 a.m., their normal summer hour time.

"We are doing this to try to keep our employees out of the heat in the hottest part of the day," according to Public Works Superintendent Jeff Brown. "By starting earlier, we can get most of our work done between 6 a.m. and 1 in the afternoon and try to keep our projects moving forward during high heat."

Earlier this year, Oregon OSHA adopted new rules to protect workers from high heat and wildfire smoke. The Mandatory Information for Heat Illness Prevention rules went into effect June 15. The rules stipulate specific rest break durations and intervals based on the day's heat index. During temperatures of 90 degrees or greater, the rule requires 10 minutes of a cool-down rest break every two hours. When the temperature is 105 degrees or greater, that number jumps up to 40

minutes of rest break every hour.

Because the change would require some heavy equipment work in the 6 a.m. hour, the city is exploring adjusting its noise ordinance to allow for the seasonal change. The ordinance limits construction to between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m., and the adjustment would allow city departments to use heavy equipment for an extra hour, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., during the summer months. The city reported it chose the 6 a.m. time start as a compromise between efficiency for work crews and respect for Pendleton residents.

"In order to be more efficient with our crews, we're looking to start earlier in the day while still trying to be respectful of noise," according to Pendleton Public Works Director Bob Patterson.

With the new schedule, public works crews will join employees of parks and recreation in the early work hours. Parks and recreation operates on a seasonal schedule where employees work 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. during the late spring and summer.

Communications specialist's duties to expand

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Jennifer Colton has been Pendleton's communications specialist since April. The position is a new one for the city, but it helps fulfill the city council's goal to improve communications.

"In order to address internal and external communications, they wanted a new person," she said.

City Manager Robb Corbett said Colton won't handle communications for all departments. The police department, for instance, sends out its own briefs and press releases.

"But we're geared up to communicate better internally and with the public," he said. "We want to focus on a few areas and be more proactive."

Improving communication about construction projects is an area growing for Colton. Public works projects disrupt people's lives, Corbett said, so the city wants to do a better job of keeping residents informed.

"That's a big part of what our communications person will do," he said.

Colton concurred. "I've worked with them a lot to get the word out about their projects," she said.

Colton has worked for multiple newspapers, including the East Oregonian, and for two Hermiston radio stations, where she was news



Yasser Marte/East Oregonian

Jennifer Colton, the city of Pendleton new communications specialist, works Tuesday, July 19, 2022, out of Pendleton City Hall. Her work duties are expanding, and she also teaches public speaking at Blue Mountain Community College.

director for six years. She was also an adjunct professor of communications at Blue Mountain Community College.

"We moved to Pendleton eight years ago," she said. "I commuted to Hermiston, so that was one reason why I applied for this job. Another is that, as a reporter, I had been on the receiving end of press releases. I read a lot that were bad, so I know what works. I wanted something a little different, being on the other side for a change, with a different skill set."

While driving to Hermiston one winter day, Colton got stuck on Interstate 84 by a crash ahead of her.

"I recorded the news sitting on the freeway," she recalled. "We called remote recording our 'mobile newsroom,' so

that time it was an 'immobile newsroom.'"

Another focus for Colton is getting out in front of hot button issues, Corbett said.

"For example, there was confusion in the public over why Uber was important," he recalled. "People wondered, 'Am I going to lose my dial a ride or taxi tickets?' We can do a better job of telling our story."

The city launched a 20-question survey to evaluate how well it communicates with residents and visitors on July 1.

The survey is open through Aug. 15. Participants who complete it on or before July 31 and choose to provide contact information will be entered into a drawing for one of four \$25 gift cards.

Internal communications

is a third area of focus for the new communications specialist, Corbett stated.

"The city has about 100 employees in 10 departments," he noted. "They don't know everything. Some people think parks department workers should know about the airport. We'd like internal memos so employees in different departments can find out what's going on, or know how to find out, so they can act as ambassadors of the city."

Corbett recalled when, as a meter reader, he would get questions about other departments he couldn't answer.

A state of the city Zoom call has been set up, with regular quarterly updates, Corbett reported.

"If all employees are unable to attend, they can review it later," he said. "The 10 department heads are invited to attend and give an overview of their operations. At the end, employees are encouraged to ask questions."

Lastly, the city aims to tout its successes better, Corbett concluded.

"We want to talk about the accomplishments of which we're proud," he said. "We want to brag a little. I hope she has time to promote what we're doing right."

Colton said her expanding responsibilities don't daunt her.

"I've been here three months and haven't been fired yet," she said.



Erick Peterson/East Oregonian

A sign Tuesday, July 19, 2022, warns people away from Highway 395 north of Hermiston due to a natural gas line break near Umatilla.

Affected area reopens after gas line break

East Oregonian

UMATILLA — Umatilla County Sheriff's Office the morning of Wednesday, July 20, reported the area north of Hermiston and near Umatilla again is open to traffic and residents following a natural gas line break the day before.

Cascade Natural Gas notified the emergency's incident command that it completed the repair of the pipeline and pressure testing.

The crisis July 19 left 16 residences without power and prompted the evacuation of those homes, according to the sheriff's office. That changed at about 7 a.m. July 20, when the sheriff's office reported the evacuation was over and roads were reopening as workers removed barricades.

"Highway 395 will remain a single lane going northbound as repair work continues on the excavation site," according to the update.

The sheriff's office dispatch center on July 19 at 11:43 a.m. received a 911 call from a construction crew reporting it had struck a 4-inch natural gas line in the area of Margaret Avenue and North Highway 395 near Umatilla.

Umatilla Rural Fire Protection Department responded to the call, and the county issued an evacuation notice for businesses and residences in the area west of North Highway 395, south of Margaret Road, east of Lind Road and north of Power City Road. Businesses on the east side of North Highway 395,

south of Wildwood Lane and north of Power City Road also had to evacuate. Commercial Tire, 81991 N. Highway 395, was placed on standby.

Oregon Department of Transportation closed Highway 395 north of Hermiston between the junction of Highway 730 at mile point 0.4 and the junction of Bense Road near mile point 1.75. The sheriff's office also reported drivers still should avoid the north end of 395 and use alternate routes.

Cascade Natural Gas crews working to repair the large line at about 8 p.m. July 19 reported they stopped the flow at the northern end of the gas line and then worked to stop and repair the south end near the location of the break.

The work required carefully adjusting pressure in the gas lines to avoid overpressure in other lines. Additionally, the sheriff's office reported, the break was in somewhat swampy terrain, causing Cascade Natural Gas crews to take extra precautions not to get water into the gas line once pressure was stopped. Windwave Communications out of Boardman also responded after the repair crew made a request for specific equipment.

PENDLETON ROUND-UP & HAPPY CANYON HALL OF FAME

Kendra Santos named Inductee Banquet MC

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Acclaimed Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association journalist and author Kendra Santos is the master of ceremonies for the Pendleton Round-Up & Happy Canyon Hall of Fame's annual Inductee Banquet.

The banquet is Sept. 11, 2022, according to a press release from the Pendleton Round-Up & Happy Canyon Hall of Fame, and honors the inductee class of 2022 into the Hall of Fame.

Born in 1961 in Davis, California, Santos grew up in a rodeo family and began her journalistic career as a teenager with Roper's Sports News. She roped her way through college

with the Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo Mustangs rodeo team, receiving a journalism degree and thereafter earning a master's degree in business administration.

Santos began her career as features editor for the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association's ProRodeo Sports News and ultimately worked her way up to Editor and PRCA director of communications. She was instrumental in developing Spin to Win magazine and contributed to the foundation of American Cowboy magazine and Pro Bull Rider magazine. Santos also has authored several

books, including "Roughstock: The Mud, the Blood and the Beer" and "Ring of Fire," and served as managing editor of the PRCA's "The Finals: A Complete History of the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo."

She won the WPRCA Media Award in 1997 and the PRCA Media Award in 2004. She has covered the Pendleton Round-Up for decades and has fond memories of coming to Pendleton.

"The Hall of Fame is honored to have someone of Kendra's caliber and notoriety serve as the master of ceremonies for our banquet,"



Santos

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