



Contributed Photo

Contractors working on a sidewalk ramp project help board up storm-damaged windows in Wallowa on Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022.

Bad weather brings out best in people

By ANN BLOOM
For the Wallowa County
Chieftain

WALLOWA — Despite being pelted by hail three inches in diameter, and after working a nine-hour shift, crew members on the ADA sidewalk ramp upgrade project in Wallowa still found it within themselves to help the community in its time of need, including aiding a pedestrian to shelter and helping board up broken windows.



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Willy Ramos of Global Electric takes plywood to a house in Wallowa on Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022, after a sudden severe hailstorm.

Henry Lugo, consultant construction inspector for the project who was on site during the storm, said after everything they had already done during their shift, “they still wanted to keep helping and doing as much as they could.”

The sudden midday hailstorm on Thursday, Aug. 11, caused several injuries, broke windows, knocked out car windshields and stripped trees of leaves.

According to a press release from the Oregon Department of Transportation, vacuum truck operator Randy Burns was responsible for guiding a pedestrian to safety, providing

care until medical personnel could arrive to treat her injuries and transport her to the hospital. The identity and condition of the woman is unknown.

During the storm, according to Lugo, drill operator Aaron Griffiths and laborer Willy Ramos began securing it of traffic cones and some signs, to make a path for emergency vehicles. He said the debris was nothing serious.

Lugo also said that Griffiths and Ramos helped

board up the broken windows of a couple Wallowa residences using plywood from their trucks. He said the plywood was on the truck and used for multiple purposes at other times. It was donated to the homeowners.

Matt Murray, a journeyman electrician, took up the responsibilities of an injured flagger, directing traffic and emergency vehicles until both lanes of traffic through town could be reopened, according to the press release.

All of the men now work

out of Portland and were unavailable for comment.

Asked if the men had training in CPR and first aid, Lugo said, in his construction experience, with companies of this size, it is common for employees to have such training.

“(It’s) very likely they had CPR and first aid. I assume that to be true,” he said.

Lugo wants people to know that after the crew had finished its work responsibilities the workers were still willing to go above and beyond to help out in a time of need.

“After their own work responsibilities were done, they kept going. At the end of a nine-hour shift (they) continued to go out and help two hours after that,” he said.

The ODOT OR 82 Wallowa/Lostine ADA sidewalk ramp upgrade project is managed and inspected by Murraysmith of Portland. The general contractor is MJ Hughes, of Vancouver, Washington. The subcontractor is Global Electric of Portland, which employs Lugo and the other crew members.

Fires burning in Eagle Cap Wilderness

Wallowa County Chieftain

BAKER CITY — Five lightning-caused fires are burning in the Eagle Cap Wilderness, according to a Sunday, Aug. 28, press release from the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

The fires are currently burning in remote areas and pose minimal threats to private property and other values, the release said. Firefighters are closely monitoring fire activity and using strategies to protect homes and property near to the fire.

The 40-acre Sturgill Fire and the adjacent 324 Fire are in the North Minam Drainage and burning mostly in ground fuels. The 20-acre Nebo Fire is in the Upper Lick Creek Drainage, 13 miles southeast of Joseph. The one-tenth of an acre Goat Mountain 1 and adjacent Goat Mountain 2 fires are in the Upper Goat Creek Drainage, 9 miles south of Lostine and have shown very little fire activity in the last two days, the release said.

All of the fires were started by lightning strikes on Aug. 23.



Wallowa-Whitman National Forest/Contributed Photo

The 20-acre Nebo Fire, seen burning in this aerial photo from the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, is burning in the Upper Lick Creek Drainage.

The fires are being managed for multiple resource benefits, including reducing fuel loading and enhancement of forest health, according to the release. Matthew Burks, a public affairs specialist with the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, said the fires are being allowed to burn so that they can consume fuels, reducing the likelihood of larger fires next summer when conditions may be drier than they are now.

“They will clean out fuels,” he said.

Burks said that the burning will improve elk habitat by creating more open spaces, adding that as long as the fires, which are burning close to the ground, remain nonthreatening they will be allowed to continue. However, should this change, steps will be taken to extinguish them.

There are no closures, however the public is advised to use caution in these areas and can expect to see smoke and fire activity. Signs are posted at affected trailheads.

RV park again on Joseph City Council agenda

Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — A permit to establish a recreational vehicle park in a general residential zone in Joseph will once again go before the city council when it meets Thursday, Sept. 1.

The matter will be open for a public hearing during the meeting that starts at 7 p.m. at the Joseph Community Events Center.

An earlier public hearing on the RV park was held during the July 7 council meeting. At that meeting, city resident John Zurita asked the council to change zoning at 709 N. Main St. from commercial to general residential. Zurita wants to locate a small RV park at the site, which is on the corner of Main Street and Russell Lane.

But several people spoke out at the hearing, all of whom were against the RV park. Opposition was expressed based on the possibility of traffic congestion caused by residents turning into the RV park and the alteration of the downtown character by having such a park just as drivers enter the town.

At that time, Zurita also was asked to contact the Oregon Department of Transportation to see if a turn lane could be installed at the location, easing the traffic concern. Zurita was to contact ODOT prior to the council taking up the issue again.

Listed as “new business” on this week’s agenda are two items that have been addressed in the past: system development charges and the urban growth boundary.

SDCs are charges that a city or county may assess to cover the “true cost” of development and include costs to existing and additional water, sewer, transportation and park services. The UGB has been the subject of controversy because of a suggested “land swap” of land within the UGB for land outside of it.

The council also has vacancies to fill — one empty council seat and three volunteer positions for a proposed planning commission. These were not listed on the agenda, but they are the subject of ongoing business.

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Meet Gary Hauck! Gary moved here about a year ago and spends hours helping younger generations perfect their fishing skills. Gary is always taking his grandchildren and great grandchildren fishing as well as anyone else that is interested in learning how to fish. This week we honor Gary as our Person Making a Difference.

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