

Suspicious package tests emergency plan

By Brent Merrill

Smoke Signals staff writer

A water temperature monitoring device found by a local fisherman up at Coast Creek and accidentally dropped off at the Tribe's Mail Room building on Grand Ronde Road prompted a suspicious package alert on Friday, Aug. 21.

Mail Room Clerk Anna White found what she thought was a suspicious package on the front porch when she arrived for work at 7 a.m. She reported the device and the Tribe's Emergency Operations Team, which was already meeting regarding the Willamina Creek Fire, received another chance to test the Tribe's Emergency Management Plan.

The device, known as a Hobo meter, was a small, black dome-shaped PVC instrument with a 4-by-4 Post-it Note attached underneath.

Facilities Maintenance Supervisor Tyson Mercier was contacted at 7:15 a.m. by Tribal Police Sgt. Jake McKnight to alert him of the situation. Tribal security was then contacted and Advanced Security personnel blocked off the area around the Mail Room shortly after Mercier was notified.

McKnight sent a photo of the device to the Salem Police Department, which said it was not something they had seen before. Mercier, who also took a photo, unsuccessfully tried to identify the device's purpose.

At 8:52 a.m., Tribal employees were notified via e-mail that traffic would be redirected off Grand Ronde Road and detoured through the Tribal campus in an effort to keep vehicles from passing by the Mail Room.

Tribal security and Oregon Department of Transportation staff blocked traffic from using Grand Ronde Road.

The Mail Room is 350 feet south from the front entrance to the Grand Ronde Food Bank, which was having a distribution day at the time.

Tribal Police issued a 300-foot safety zone around the Mail Room and GIS Coordinator Volker Mell created an aerial map for key personnel showing the zone's perimeters. An evacuation of the food pantry began shortly thereafter.

The Salem Police Department's Bomb Squad arrived with two officers at 9:30 a.m. and they sent in the first of two remote robots to the Mail Room porch at 9:35 a.m.

The first robot took an X-ray of the suspicious device and found what looked like a computer chip inside. It was then determined that the device should be destroyed in an effort to err on the side of caution.

Tribal administration sent another all-employee e-mail out at 9:36 a.m. notifying staff that a suspicious package had been located and that Grand Ronde Road would be blocked off from Ackerson Road to Blacktail Drive. The e-mail alerted staff of police activity and said an update would follow.

Emergency Operations Coordinator Jamie Baxter issued a campus-wide lockdown at 10 a.m. and she extended the exclusion zone around the Mail Room to more than 1,000 feet.

Tribal Assistant General Manager Bryan Langley issued an all-employee e-mail at 10:02 a.m. asking staff to call 911 if they found any suspicious packages.

Tribal administration issued another all-employee e-mail at 10:07 a.m. advising staff of an all-campus lockdown for the next 30 minutes. Staff members were asked to stay in their buildings until they could be updated.

Two minutes later, Baxter issued



Photo by Brent Merrill

A remote-controlled robot from the Salem Police Department's Bomb Squad approaches a suspicious package left on the porch of the Tribal Mail Room on Friday, Aug. 21. Bomb Squad personnel were unfamiliar with the device and concerned that it had a computer chip inside of it. They opted to destroy the device for the safety of the community. At left, a water temperature gauge was mistakenly left on the porch of the Tribal Mail Room on Friday, Aug. 21, prompting a suspicious package alert and placing the Tribal campus in lockdown.



Photo by Tyson Mercier

an all-employee e-mail advising staff to "shelter in place" for the next 30 minutes.

At 10:11 a.m., Salem Police Department Bomb Squad personnel neutralized the water temperature monitoring device with a shotgun blast from the larger of the two remote-controlled robots.

Baxter also asked Mercier and his staff to conduct a campus-wide sweep to help determine if the device found on the porch of the Mail Room was isolated.

Grand Ronde Food Bank Director Francene Ambrose sent out an e-mail notifying everyone that the food pantry had been closed due to an emergency and would re-open the following day on Saturday, Aug. 22.

At 10:29 a.m., Baxter issued an all-employee e-mail advising staff that the "shelter in place" order had been lifted.

Network Administrator Greg Patton followed up Baxter's notice to all employees with one of his own at 10:31 a.m. Patton's notification directed staff to resume normal business operations and that there was no longer any danger to the employees or the community.

At 10:47 a.m., Patton used the situation to once again remind all staff via an all-employee e-mail of the importance of having staff provide alternate contact information to be used in case of emergencies.

"This week we've had two events that demonstrate the usefulness and necessity of communicating emergency information to our employees and surrounding community," said Patton in his e-mail. "CTGR has implemented a new AutoMessenger notification system in an effort to provide immediate notification in the event of weather warnings, hazards, disasters and other campus emergencies. Current events in Oregon and surrounding areas have brought attention to the need for additional contact information in the event of catastrophes."

It was later determined that the device was a water temperature gauge and that it was accidentally dropped off at the Mail Room instead of Natural Resources.


However, its purpose was also unknown to the Salem Police Department Bomb Squad, which complimented the Grand Ronde Tribe and its Police Department and security company for erring on the side of safety for its employees and community residents. ■

Farmers Market!

When: October 10
Time: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Where: Back parking lot of the C-Store

- *The Community Garden will have a booth and then we are opening 5 other booths for Tribal member families at the low cost of \$20 per Farmers Market. It will be first-come, first-served to sign up for booth.
- *If you are interested in having a space, please contact Kristy DeLoe 503-879-2018 or Patti LeClaire 503-879-2247
- *Funds received from booth rentals will go back to the Food Sustainability Project and Community Garden
- *Each person is responsible for supplying their own tables, tent, etc.

Ad created by George Valdez



S.E.L.F

A Trauma Informed Group Curriculum

Starting July 13, 2015 Every
Monday 5:30-7:00
Community Center Building East
Entrance Conference Room

Contact:
Anne Falla @ 503-879-1660

A domestic and sexual violence support group focusing on survivors of trauma and their journeys to emotional and psychological wellness.