

# Storms closed highways 18 and 22

## STORM continued from front page

their limbs as the weight became too much to bear. The remains of more than 400 downed trees had to be removed for Highway 18 to re-open and about 450 downed and hazardous trees were cleaned up to re-open Hebo Road.

Highway 18 re-opened at 8 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 14. ODOT crews and utility workers continued cleanup work and hazardous tree removal on the roadside for the next couple of weeks and motorists were told to expect lane closures and delays while the work continues.

On Hebo Road, the section from Highway 18 to Grand Ronde Road was the last section of roadway to open in the West Valley because of downed trees and limbs.

Many trees on the Grand Ronde Tribal campus and at Spirit Mountain Casino also suffered damage. Tribal employees worked most of the week after the Tribal Chiefs' holiday to clean up the Tribal campus.

Portland General Electric reported power outages in most of the West Valley, including Grand Ronde, Willamina and Sheridan. According to the company's outage map, there were 295 affected customers in the Grand Ronde area on Sunday afternoon with an estimated restoration of power set for 4 p.m. Monday, Feb. 15.

Tribal Communications Director



**A damaged tree sits outside of Black Bear Lodge on Tuesday, Feb. 16. A snow and ice storm hit the Grand Ronde area over the Valentine's Day weekend and knocked out power and damaged many trees.**

Sara Thompson said power to the government campus was out for approximately 36 hours. There were no reports of damage to Tribal facilities.

Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier, who lives in Tribal Housing, reported that his power returned at about 1:30 p.m. Sunday after it went out on Saturday morning.

"Other than that, it was cold," he said. "A lot of trees split. One by my house was cut down."

PGE reported 4,405 account outages in Polk County and 7,603 in Yamhill County. The Grand Ronde community straddles the line be-

tween the two counties.

According to social media posts, Tribal General Manager David Fullerton and Tribal police officers, as well as other Tribal staff members, went door to door on Saturday morning checking on Tribal Elders and getting generators for those with medical needs.

In addition, Tribal Maintenance staff members cleared sidewalks of snow and ice.

Fullerton sent an all-employee e-mail on Wednesday, Feb. 17, to thank Tribal staff and volunteers who worked to ensure the safety of the community and Elders by

shoveling walkways, brewing and delivering hot coffee, removing downed trees, preparing and delivering hot meals, delivering heaters and generators, and knocking on doors to check on elderly residents.

Spirit Mountain Casino remained open throughout the weekend.

Tribal governmental offices closed at 3 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 11, because of a threat of freezing rain and remained closed on Friday, Feb. 12. Offices re-opened Tuesday, Feb. 16, following the observance of Tribal Chiefs' Day on Monday, Feb. 15, which marked the beginning of a warming trend in western Oregon.

However, the regularly scheduled Tribal Council Legislative Action Committee hearing held at 9 a.m. Tuesdays was postponed because of ongoing power and Internet connectivity issues. The Willamina School District also canceled classes on Tuesday because many students did not have electricity or Internet to attend distance learning classes via computers.

Temperatures in western Oregon reached into the high 40s on Monday, Feb. 15, and throughout the rest of the week, melting most of the remaining ice and snow and allowing workers to clean up the debris and start reconnecting electrical power lines.

The storm was the largest snow and ice event to hit western Oregon since the December 2008 storm that shut down Tribal offices for an entire week. ■



**Groundskeeper Youvani Ring tosses a branch onto a pile while cleaning up fallen branches on Salmon Way in Grand Ronde on Tuesday, Feb. 16.**



**A car passes fallen branches at Spirit Mountain Casino on Tuesday, Feb. 16.**



**An Elder walks to his home past a damaged tree on Coyote Court on Tuesday, Feb. 16. The storm damaged many area trees and forced the closures of both highways 18 and 22 heading westbound at Grand Ronde Road.**

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**Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez**