

OSHA from 1A

cleaning and maintenance of the facility, in addition to the proper placement and display of required state permits.

Florence Public Information Officer Megan Messmer responded to inquires from the Siuslaw News by providing a statement that highlighted the city's concern for its employees and its willingness to make any necessary changes to ensure employee safety.

"The city immediately corrected and paid fines regarding any issues which our professional staff believed could possibly pose a safety hazard or violated OSHA regulations. However, we believe that some of the issues were wrongly

cited," Messmer said in the statement. "City staff is working with OSHA to correct the record regarding these issues."

While Florence decided to challenge some of the fines that were assessed, staff immediately took action to remedy any situation that might harm city workers.

"The city disagreed with the method by which OSHA processed the fines associated with the citation and appealed fines associated with the overall citation," Messmer said in her statement. "Please note that the city does not disagree with taking the corrective action needed to ensure employee safety and the city has taken immediate corrective action and is in the process of constructing a long-term solution for entry to the Ivy Street Sewer

Pump Station."

One of the measures the city took to address violations was to ensure that there is an approved way of entering the facility's "wet well," where wastewater is collected.

Messmer said this project is well underway.

"City staff and the city's contract engineer met with the OSHA inspector for a closing conference related to his inspection," Messmer wrote. "At that time, the engineer was able to discuss possible alternative methods for entry to the wet well that would remove the confined space designation.

"We have received the final engineered plans to construct a concrete staircase into the wet well. The city is currently requesting bids for construction and that project will be

completed by the end of September."

According to Messmer, OSHA concerns regarding the placement of railings and walkways to protect workers from slipping or falling have been addressed and the majority of required upgrades have been made or are in the process of being completed.

When asked if the citizens in the vicinity of the treatment plant were at risk in any way in relation to the citation, Corvin said, "Looking at the nature of the violations at the plant, there is nothing to reasonably suggest there is such a problem."

In addition, Florence's appeal to OSHA regarding the assessed fines was partially successful, with the initial amount of the penalty being reduced, Messmer said.

"The city requested that OSHA bundle several of the citations as they related to the same violation. OSHA staff declined to bundle those citations, but they did reduce the City's fine by 36.4 percent to a total fine of \$5,000," Messmer said.

OSHA has submitted the adjusted citation to the Administrative Law Judge for final approval.

Florence has already paid \$1,560 of that total and will pay the remaining \$3,440 once the invoice is received.

"The city fully supports worker safety and has a very positive history of strong OSHA compliance," Messmer said. "Florence is committed to providing not only our employees with a safe and healthy work environment, but the community in general."

Lunches from 1A

The group hits all the hotspots: the Mapleton School District campus on East Mapleton Road, where a volunteer hands out food; Mapleton Food Share, 10718 Highway 126; and the Deadwood Market, 14699 Highway 36.

On their way to these places, the volunteers keep a look out for children and offer them lunches.

"Do you have friends?" they ask. "Take some more lunches to give to them."

The women also bring the lunches directly to homes if necessary.

There's an entire network of people in Mapleton who help out in these ways, going grocery shopping for neighbors with disabilities or no money for gas.

But geography isn't just a barrier for getting the isolated assistance. It's one of the driving factors as to

why parents are in need for programs like Sack Lunches in the first place.

Brown moved to Mapleton a few years ago with her daughter. Money was tight so she went to the SOS program to get assistance. She had lived in Hawaii and Portland, but they were expensive and she felt unsafe.

Mapleton seemed to quell those fears. The rent was cheap and she felt comfortable walking around the streets with her child at night.

But then the problem of geography hit. She had planned to get a job in Florence, but the market was tight. There was Eugene, but the commute would have taken her from her family for too long for a single mother.

The Mapleton School District was hiring bus drivers. It was perfect, a wage of \$20 an hour. It's not as high as one would think.

Because there's no industry in Mapleton, the school is forced to pay that rate.

Brown explained: "If you have a split shift, you're not going to drive all the way here from Florence to work for \$10 an hour to work as a bus driver. So we've negotiated the union wage high enough to get someone like me."

She loves the job, but her take home pay is less than \$1,000 a month. She works a split shift — pick up the kids in the morning, bring them home in the afternoon — so finding another part time job mid-day is impossible.

She hustles for small gigs. "I try and get extra money," Brown said. "I try and clean houses or I work in town with a lady doing garage sales. Nothing is guaranteed income. It's what you can get, when you can get it."

Brown was on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), but she described an unfortunate rule in the system that slashed her benefits.

As a bus driver, there's certain times a year where she makes more money, like driving the track team to another town. It's a rare occurrence, and never happens in the summer. SNAP bases eligibility on a single

monthly paycheck. That is, they don't look at the year's average income, but on the last month's pay.

Brown had just got a few field trip jobs when the SNAP audit came, temporarily inflating her monthly worth. Her payout was slashed and she did not have enough assistance to last her two weeks.

Like many others, Brown went to Food Share for help. Soon, she was volunteering there full time.

The program has saved her life, she believes, but times are always rough.

"It's constantly in the forefront of my mind. Turn the light switches off. Conserve, conserve, conserve. You don't run fans and air conditioners because it costs too much. You don't water the lawns because of the water bills. I don't do a lot of trips to town because there's just no gas money," she said.

But Brown has no self-pity in her voice. She feels strong, hopeful that her daughter will go to college and make a better life for herself.

Others who grew up and stayed in Upriver are in an even direr situation.

Harden explained it this way,



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