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## 'Are We Ready?' Part III — Future threats to The Grove

In recent months, residents have contended with a 100-year snowstorm, flooding and fires. What do they tell us about our area's readiness in the event of a major disaster?

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD  
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**Editor's Note:** This is the final instalment in a three-part special series, which began Aug. 7, looking at the state of emergency preparedness in the Cottage Grove area, identify possible future threats and examine solutions.



Cottage Grove Sentinel Special Series

When it comes to emergency planning, no one has a crystal ball.

"It's a never-ending process," said Cottage Grove City Manager

Richard Meyers. "If we think we're going to prepare for every possible situation, we're kidding ourselves."

In enduring the natural disasters that swept Cottage Grove this year,

many found that they were personally unprepared for a survival situation while government agencies retrospectively attested that there was room for improvement.

As this year gave area residents a taste of how uncompromising nature can be, future threats undoubtedly linger on the horizon and the way in which we ought to prepare is not, for each case, immediately obvious.

It's also important to note that disasters have no obligation to oc-

cur at our personal convenience, adding an extra dice roll to potential scenarios.

"Any of these incidents could occur at any time," said Meyers. "They're not going to occur when everybody's at home watching TV all together. Somebody's going to be at basketball practice. Somebody's going to be having a hamburger at a restaurant. Somebody else is going to be on the road going home. That's when it's going to happen. And how are you going to

See **FUTURE 7A**

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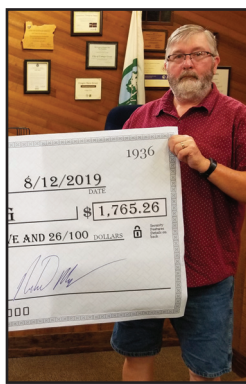
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### WEATHER



Mix of sun and rain with a high of 75 and a low tonight of 58.  
Full forecast on A5

### COMMUNITY



Mayor's Golf Tourney benefits H2O  
A3

### SPORTS — B



Heritage Fair celebrates past skills  
B1



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

A structure fire damaged a house on Main Street over the weekend, the fifth in a spate of local fires.

## String of fires hits The Grove

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD  
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In a little over two weeks, a spate of five fires have occurred in and around Cottage Grove, raising concerns and speculation among residents as to the cause of the blazes.

"South Lane County Fire and Rescue (SLCFR) averages about 36 structure-type fires in the course of a year," said SLCFR Division Chief Joe Raade. "So, it averages out to about three a month."

Structure fires can vary, from room and contents fires to the full loss of a structure.

The sudden spike in structure fires has not gone unnoticed.

"That is definitely concerning to us," Raade said. "We have dug into all of these fires — all five of them."

Two of the fires have occurred on Main Street and the others on Seventh Street, Tenth Street and Birch Avenue.

Three of the fires' causes have been positively identified.

"They are unfortunate accidents," said Raade. "Two of them are electrical in nature."



NICK SNYDER/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

A member of the Cottage Grove Police Department keeps an area clear off of Main Street as firefighters work to extinguish a home fire over the weekend.

were mixed. Raade predicted that two looked to be total losses, but no serious injuries or deaths resulted from the emergencies.

"I know we did have some people get a little bit of smoke exposure, but none of them sought any further care," said Raade.

The presence of Deputy State Fire Marshal Kristina Deschaine has also roused public speculation on social media that an arson investigation is underway by the state fire marshal's office.

Raade said that Deschaine's presence was not out of the ordinary. "She's an ally of ours that we see

See **FIRES 8A**

## Workshop offers authorship to veterans

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD  
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Jan McHenry is trying to help troubled veterans and their families rewrite the narratives of their lives — one workshop at a time.

"My commitment is that every person who does the workshop is free from the constraints of their past," McHenry said.

Around 20 people attended McHenry's workshop, "Operation Veteran Freedom," in the Cottage Grove Community Center on Aug. 10. The workshop is a program out of National Alliance to End Veteran Suicide, a nonprofit which has spent the last decade organizing events and connecting veterans, mainly in Oregon and Washington.

McHenry's own story starts with his service in Vietnam as a marine in the infantry.

Fifty years ago to the day of Saturday's workshop in Cottage Grove, McHenry was on a hill in Vietnam with about 100 other marines when they were suddenly overrun by the North Vietnamese Army.

"They estimated 550 to 650 NVA soldiers," McHenry said. "Five of us walked off the hill."

During the battle, McHenry was knocked unconscious from an explosion. Still engaged in combat the next morning, McHenry carried a friend to a medvac landing spot and then returned to the carnage to help more injured men. Mortar bombardments began again and the helicopters stopped coming in. Upon returning to the

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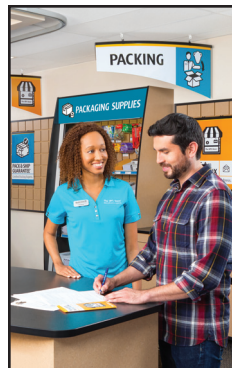
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