

Grease, wipes plug wastewater treatment plant

City staff took on an unenviable cleaning job last week.

As heavy rains moved grease and disposable wipes down the sewer collection lines to the treatment plant, the grease and wipes plugged headworks screens, reducing the ability to filter the sewage before entering the plant's orbital.

The city issued a reminder to the public following the incident:

"Please don't flush wipes in the toilet or wash grease down the

drains. The products damage the sewer pipes and cause plugs in the treatment plant. If the treatment plant is unable to correctly treat the sewage to the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) specifications, the city could receive a fine for violating our approved Discharge Permit with DEQ."

The city also thanked the staff at the wastewater treatment plant for unplugging the headworks and keeping the plant operating.

Gov. Brown urges Oregonians to get boosters to protect against Omicron

OHSU modeling shows the state is weeks away from a spike in cases, fueled by the quickly spreading Omicron variant; Governor calls on 1 million Oregonians to step up and get their booster dose by Jan. 31

PORTLAND, Ore.—In a press conference on Dec. 17, Governor Kate Brown provided an update on the current state of COVID-19 in Oregon.

She was joined by Oregon Health Authority Director Patrick Allen, State Epidemiologist Dr. Dean Sidelinger, Chief Medical Officer at the Oregon Health & Science University Dr. Renee Edwards, and Lead Data Scientist at OHSU's Business Intelligence Unit Dr. Peter Graven.

"This week we identified the first cases of the Omi-

cron variant in Oregon. While we are all still learning about this new variant, it is clear from the experiences of the United Kingdom and other countries that we have only weeks to prepare before Omicron hits our communities and health care systems in full force," said Governor Brown. "Masks, vaccines, and the incredible efforts of our health care workers, public health partners, and National Guard members have seen us through the Delta surge. We will need to make the same statewide, collaborative efforts to see us through Omicron."

OHSU modeling shows that Oregon has about a three-week window to prepare for this next surge, said Brown, and that boosters are our best protection against Omicron.

"The state will be taking

important steps to make sure our most vulnerable Oregonians have access to booster shots and to make sure we are ready to support our hospital systems for another surge," she said. "A big part of that plan will depend on each and every one of you."

The governor called on one million Oregonians to get their booster dose by the end of January and directed OHA to get the

vaccine supply and distribution capacity in place to support the goal.

"However, we will only reach it if everyone does their part," Brown continued. "Get your booster shot. Boosters work and are incredibly effective at continuing your protection against this virus and hospitalization. If you aren't yet vaccinated, now is the time. This can be a matter of life or death."

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'TikTok challenge' passes without incident

By DAMIEN SHERWOOD
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An online social media challenge took a dark turn last week, putting school districts across the nation on high alert.

Concerns arose after a TikTok challenge urging people to make threats of violence to schools on Dec. 17 began trending.

While the origin of the viral message is unclear, several news reports have traced it to an initial challenge to skip school, which eventually morphed into a challenge to issue bomb and shooting threats to schools nationwide.

Though there were scattered reports in other states of arrests during the challenge last week, there appeared to be no incidents locally.

"I did not know of any and do not know of any credible threats — or even threats that were determined to be false — that have happened as a result of the TikTok challenge," said Cottage Grove Police Chief Scott Shepherd.

South Lane School District (SLSD) contacted the Cottage Grove Police Department (CGPD) the day prior to the challenge date, alerting the agency of the issue.

"While we do not believe the threat to be credible, we are closely monitoring the situation and taking it seriously," said SLSD in a statement last week.

CGPD increased its presence in patrols around schools last Thursday and Friday, though the days were uneventful in regards to the concerns around the online threats.

"Unless the school had a report that that they didn't share with us, there have been no reports of any kind of disturbance or violence or anything," said Shepherd. "Because we didn't have any threats, we didn't look into it any more than that. And my instructions to the school district staff were: 'We will take every potential threat or concern at face value and investigate each of them as they come up.'"

Part of the challenge for the police department, Shepherd said, was mea-

suring its response to such threats.

"I think it's good to acknowledge those threats to a certain degree, but I hate giving them a lot of legs when there's no basis for there to be any kind of concern," he said. "It's really a kind of a balancing act, because if you put too much into it, even if we respond in a certain way — and sometimes we've responded to potential threats, just with presence — we've been criticized for that, too."

Shepherd praised the school district's response and communication around the issue as it worked with the police department to keep students safe but not overreact.

Both the school district and police department encourage people to reach out if they sense a credible threat.

"If there are any concerns, or somebody has a concern about an individual or something and is really concerned about it, give either the school district or the police department a call and we'll do our best to investigate it," said Shepherd. "We would much rather investigate something that turns out to be false than not to have something reported to us that is the opposite."

Individuals can also make safety reports using the SafeOregon tip line at www.safeoregon.com.

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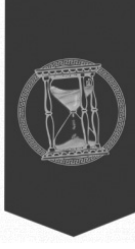
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