

Polk County
Itemizer-Observer

Volume 140, Issue 36 www.Polkio.com September 9, 2015 75¢



Will they stand or fall?

Some buildings — even old ones — will stand during and after a 9.0 earthquake, while others will not. Itemizer-Observer staff

Are Polk County governments ready for the 'big one'?

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

Editor's note: This is the second in a series of three stories exploring what would happen during and after the predicted 9.0 Cascadia subduction zone earthquake.

POLK COUNTY — It was a coincidence that Falls City City Councilor Jenn Drill volunteered to lead the "simplification" process of the city's emergency operations plan during the council's goal setting session in March.

Her objective was to make it more user-friendly and tailored to Falls City's needs, instead of a mass of unnecessary detail kept in a hefty binder.

"Nobody wants to go through a thick notebook in the middle of a disaster," Drill said.

Little did she know that by

the time the committee had met twice, "Cascadia subduction zone earthquake" would become a fearsome phrase.

The possibility of such a disaster put the committee's work in focus.

Falls City, of all the cities in Polk County, needs extra organization and cooperation in what could be an extended period of isolation as assistance makes its way there.

Drill said the city, Falls City School District, area churches and business will compile resources — generators, fuel, water filtration equipment, food and supplies — and designate emergency operations centers.

Two command centers will be set up, one on the north side of the Little Luckiamute River and one on the south side, just in case the bridge

spanning the river collapses.

All partners know that the city may be on its own for a longer time than others, meaning the town will have to be resourceful, Drill noted.

Falls City School District isn't much further behind in its own preparation, except for seismic upgrades to buildings, a common issue for schools and municipalities across the state.

Aging school buildings, city halls, and police and fire stations in Oregon could suffer significant damage — or collapse — in a major earthquake. In Dallas School District, all of its buildings, with the exception of one, are in the "high risk of collapse" category. Monmouth and Dallas city hall, both built in the 1920s or 1930s, are in need of upgrades.

Oregon's legislature allo-

cated \$330 million in its last session for seismic upgrades to public buildings, including \$175 million in grants going to schools this biennium.

The application period opens this fall and most local jurisdictions are looking into applying for grants.

In Falls City, in the meantime, the district has 55-gallon drum emergency kits at its schools with basic supplies.

"They are not going to save everything, but will meet some basic needs," Falls City Superintendent Jack Thompson said.

Thompson said, if the earthquake were to happen during the school day, students and staff are familiar with protocol as the district — and all others in the state — are required to do two drills each year.

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IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS NEWS

The art of the spoken word — storytelling — will be the focus Dallas Public Library's "Storytelling Festival" Friday and Saturday.

The first-of-its-kind festival for the library will feature an evening performance for adults by Portland Story Theater, a troupe of professional storytellers. Saturday, a number of storytellers with tales suitable for all ages will perform at the library throughout the day.

Mark Greenhalgh-Johnson, the Dallas library manager, said events like this are growing in popularity, perhaps filling a void left by social media culture.

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FALLS CITY NEWS

Oregon's Infrastructure Finance Authority (IFA) has awarded the city of Falls City a \$20,000 grant to complete a new water master plan.

Falls City City Council will review the agency's award letter, sent on Aug. 28, at its meeting Thursday. The council will give final approval once the agency send the city its grant contract.

The project will cost \$80,000. Mayor Terry Ungricht said the city has budgeted \$60,000 of its own money for the plan, but will still look for other grants or other resources to help offset that cost.

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INDEPENDENCE NEWS

Central senior Kylie Nash isn't a fan of downtime. From volleyball in the fall to basketball in the winter and softball in the spring, Nash isn't one to enjoy idle time.

"I definitely couldn't see myself dropping a sport," Nash said. "I need to be in sports. It keeps me busy."

As she enters her final season with the Panthers, Nash is focused on enjoying the present.

"It's not much different," Nash said. "It's still varsity. It makes it fun and helps me lead even more because they see me in a leading role more so than in my younger years."

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MONMOUTH NEWS

Kim Seidel is thrilled to return to Monmouth to work as the principal at Monmouth Elementary School.

"I went to Western Oregon University," she said. "My husband and I met here. We both said if we ever have the opportunity to live back in Monmouth, we'd do that. We brought our three kids with us." Seidel had wanted to be a teacher since she was 7. Now 36, she spent 14 years in Tillamook at a fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade school. "I'm really excited to be in a school with younger grades," Seidel noted. "You really miss that."

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POLK COUNTY NEWS

The man Candy Fryrear loves, and has been married to for 46 years, is sitting right next to her, and yet he may as well be across the world.

"I'm an Alzheimer's widow," she says. Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are diseases that attack the mind, robbing patients of their memories before moving on to kill the body. The first casualties are the people who love them.

Denny, 74, doesn't really remember Candy — sometimes he does, she says, "but a lot of times I think he just thinks I'm his mother," — but he smiles a lot.

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Lending a helping hand



Mikela Bruer helps Emie Olbregts with her locker during Dallas High School's first day of school on Tuesday. LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

<p>THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK</p>	<p>wed</p> <p>Hear from Commissioner Mike Ainsworth at the MI chamber luncheon today at the Indy civic center. Noon. Free.</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 82 Lo: 51</p>	<p>thu</p> <p>Ladies Bible study begins at Evangelical Bible Church in Dallas today. Two times are available for women. 9:30 a.m., 7 p.m. \$22.50.</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 88 Lo: 54</p>	<p>fri</p> <p>Grab your garden gloves and head to the Gentle House at WOU for a garden work party followed by lunch. 9 a.m.-noon. Free.</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 94 Lo: 56</p>	<p>sat</p> <p>Apples and pears are in season, and what better place to pick some up than at Independence Riverview Market? 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Free.</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 90 Lo: 56</p>	<p>sun</p> <p>Buell Grange will host breakfast this morning at the grange, complete with eggs, sausage, and pancakes. 8-11 a.m. Free.</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 82 Lo: 53</p>	<p>mon</p> <p>Head down to Main Street Park in Monmouth to help tear down the stage now that the summer festivals are over. 5 p.m. Free.</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 82 Lo: 52</p>	<p>tue</p> <p>Explore the world of coin collecting with others who have collected for years at the Monmouth Senior Center. 7 p.m. Free.</p> <p>Sunny Hi: 75 Lo: 49</p>
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