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Crash closes Ellendale Saturday

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — A single car accident caused a road closure on East Ellendale Road just east of Bowersville Road due to a downed power line pole on Saturday.

The Polk County Sheriff's Office received a call at 8:15 a.m. about a single car accident. Responders arrived on scene and found that Erika Breeden, 22, of Dallas, veered off the road and collided with a power pole, knocking it down.

"(Breeden) believed she fell asleep," Sheriff Mark Garton said.

Breeden was transported to Salem Hospital with minor injuries.

The downed power pole caused minimal outages, but also damaged a second pole.

"The initial outage impacted one customer," Pacific Power Regional Community Manager Doris Johnston said. "The linemen assessed the situation and saw that we needed to replace two poles. We did a lot of work to get everything set up before we took an outage for additional customers."

Linemen replaced the fallen pole and the pole directly across from it. Approximately 188 customers were without power from 3:27 p.m. to 6:08 p.m. while workers replaced power lines between the two newly-installed poles.

Ellendale Road remained closed until approximately 6:45 p.m. on Saturday.

"We want to emphasize safety for our customers and employees," Johnston said. "We want people to be cautious of changing weather conditions and to just be careful."

WOU viewing party

Itemizer-Observer staff report

INDEPENDENCE — Independence Cinema will host a viewing party of Western Oregon's men's basketball team's Elite Eight game Wednesday (today).

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Game begins at 6:30 p.m. There is no cost to attend, but seating is limited.

To reserve seats: 503-838-8710.



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Three of the nine horses living in a pasture near Highway 51 in Independence, graze on Monday. The muddy field conditions and no shelter for the animals has been a cause for concern for neighbors in the area.

VET FINDS NO NEGLIGENCE

Nine horses near Independence are fed high-quality alfalfa, supplements

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — In Oregon, horses are considered livestock.

That means the legal standard of care for horses is different than for domestic animals.

The case of a group of horses in an unfortunately muddy field in Independence has put the legal requirements of the care of horses into sharp focus.

"There are minimum standards for equine and livestock: It is food — good food, essentially — potable water and vet care, if necessary," said Sheriff Mark Garton. "Those are the three for livestock. Shelter is not a requirement."

That is the problem for most people who have reported concerns about nine horses living in a field on Stryker Road near Highway 51 in Independence. The Polk County Sheriff's Office has taken numerous calls and has made several visits to the property since reports began in November.



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

A vet evaluated the horses in February, finding no neglect.

"Horses have no shelter and (are) standing in mud up to their knees," a caller reported on Feb. 1 according to a call summary provided by the sheriff's office. Other callers cited physical and psychological health risks for the animals living in the field and two horse rescue operations have been contacted. "Perhaps a vet could be sent to the location to check for thrush, hoof rot, skin ailments," another caller said.

A veterinarian has visited the property twice, most recently on Feb. 9 when Ben Braat with Linn Veterinary Hospital in Albany, was asked by the sheriff's office to evaluate the animals. A summary of his report said that the horses were being fed high-quality alfalfa and four of the older horses were given "senior equine" supplements. He found a few of the horses were thin,

but attributed that to their advanced age. The horses range in age from 6 to 27 years old.

One horse had rain rot on its back, according to the report summary, but Braat reported that allegations of neglect were unfounded.

With that, the sheriff's office has concluded its investigation.

"We can't force ourselves on a situation we don't have any reason being there," Garton said.

He noted this isn't the only place where horses are living in similar conditions and said if signs of neglect were evident, his office would take action.

"We are always very thorough and we have not shied away from taking animals," he said.

The horses have been on the property since August, but the problems began with the rain.

The field had worse-than-expected drainage issues and little ground cover before the horses were placed in the pasture.

See HORSES, Page 6A

Legislators sound off on minimum wage

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

SALEM — The Oregon Legislature wrapped up its 2016 short session on March 3 and left in its wake 166 bills passed by the House and another 157 passed by the Senate. Gov. Kate Brown has signed 63 so far.

"It was the worst session I've ever attended," said Sen. Brian Boquist, who has served in the legislature since 2000. "The intent of the short session was sold as being a budget rebalance and any minor technical fixes."

That is not what this was, Boquist said.

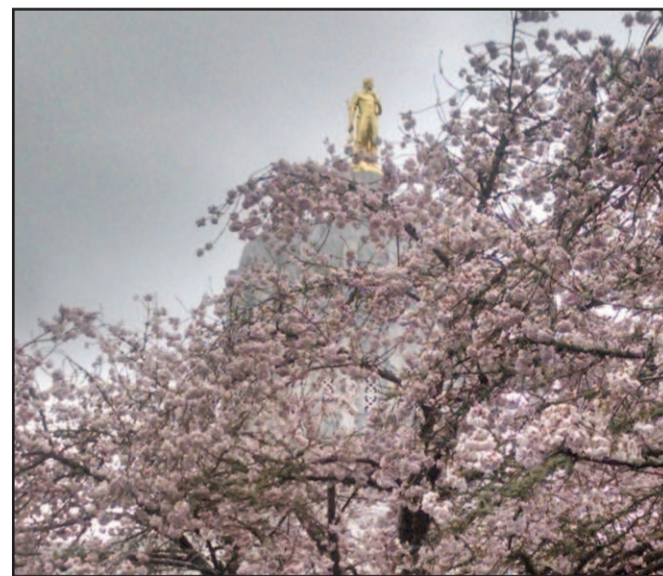
"You have people come in with these massive policy concepts," he said, among them minimum wage and the clean coal standard, which, Boquist said, was "rammed" through the short session to prevent ballot measures.

Rep. Paul Evans disagrees that the minimum wage bill was pushed through the 32-day session.

"We really began public hearings in '15," Evans said. "This was not rushed. It was, perhaps, not pretty, but it was not rushed."

The new law is based on a three-tier system and will be phased in over six years.

See SESSION, Page 6A



EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

Lawmakers recently ended the short 32-day session.

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS

A garage fire last week displaces two Dallas families. Both families are in need of assistance.

»Page 7A

A Dallas 4-H club wants to know how you feel about plastic bags.

»Page 16A

FALLS CITY

Funding, options to be explored for Wagner Community Library.

»Page 3A

MONMOUTH

Polk County marijuana taxes may boost general funds.

»Page 8A

SPORTS

Dallas softball coach Brandi Jackson's first game was a family affair against her former coach — and father.

»Page 13A

EDUCATION

Schools are exploring ways to fit in more PE.

»Page 15A

MES To host playground work day on Friday

Itemizer-Observer staff report

MONMOUTH — The playground at Monmouth Elementary School has been flooded for much of the school year, said Principal Kim Seidel.

To get the issue fixed, the school will host a maintenance day on Friday starting at 8:30 a.m. People may bring tools and equipment — or just themselves — to help dig up the playground and flush the drainage system.

Once that is done, volunteers will lay down river rock, gardening cloth and bark chips.

People may come help at any time of the day on Friday, Seidel said.

For more information: email kseidel@central.k12.or.us.

THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK

wed Take your young reader to the Dallas Public Library where he or she can practice reading to Davos the dog. 4 p.m. Free.	thu Are you living with someone with Alzheimer's? Join a support group at Monmouth Senior Center. 9:30 a.m. Free.	fri Easter Egg Hunts begin today at Jefferson Lodge Memory Care and go throughout Saturday. For more Easter activities: Page 12A.	sat See dolls and doll-related items of all types at the 34th annual Doll Show at the Polk County Fairgrounds. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Free.	sun Happy Easter! Whether you celebrate the day at a sunrise service or at brunch at a local venue, may your day be filled with joy.	mon The Dallas Garden Club will demonstrate container gardening recycling old bird baths at its monthly meeting. 6:30 p.m. Free.	tue James2 Community Kitchen offers meals to all who are hungry at St. Philip Catholic Church each Tuesday. 4:30-6 p.m. Free.
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