

Oregon News

ACCIDENT HAPPENED ON YAQUINA BAY BAR, ONE OF THE MOST NOTORIOUS IN OREGON

Three killed when commercial crab boat capsizes off Newport

By Gillian Flaccus
Associated Press

PORTLAND — A commercial crabbing boat capsized in rough waters off the Oregon coast, killing the three men aboard and sending a shock wave through a seafaring community already struggling from a monthlong delay to the annual crabbing season.

The U.S. Coast Guard said the vessel, the Mary B. II, overturned about 10 p.m. Tuesday as it crossed Yaquina Bay bar in Newport. The bar is one of the most notorious off the Oregon coast, and authorities said crews faced 12- to 14-foot waves as they tried to rescue the fishermen.

The men had called for an escort across the bar and a responding Coast Guard boat was nearby when the crabbing boat capsized “without warning,” the Coast Guard said Wednesday evening in a news release. The Coast Guard is investigating the incident.

James Lacey, 48, of South Toms River, New Jersey, was pulled from the ocean by helicopter and flown to a local hospital, where he was pronounced dead. The body of Joshua Porter, 50, of Toledo, Oregon, washed up on a beach early Wednesday.

The body of the boat’s skipper, Stephen Biernacki, 50, of Barnegat Township, New Jersey, was found on the hull of the boat after it, too, washed up on a jetty.

The tragedy was nothing

“The difficulty is once you’re out at sea, they can handle a lot of conditions. But the trouble is trying to get back across those bars.”

— **Tim Novotny, Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission**

new for Newport, a working fishing port about 130 miles southwest of Portland on Oregon’s central coast. The small town hosts a granite memorial at Yaquina Bay etched with more than 100 names of local fishermen lost at sea over the past century and shared tragedies are woven into the fabric of the community.

“It happens frequently enough that we actually have funds that help families during this time. We fundraise all year long, and we try to help them as much as we can,” said Taunette Dixon, president of the nonprofit Newport Fishermen’s Wives, which supports families who have lost a breadwinner to the waves.

But those in the industry said the loss hit particularly hard this year, when crabbers were rushing to sea to try to catch up after the annual Oregon Dungeness crab season was delayed more than a month. The season usually begins Dec. 1, but this year it only began last week because the crabs were too small and didn’t have enough meat to

harvest.

Then, a series of bad storms in the first week of the season prevented many crabbers from recovering their pots on Jan. 4, the first day they could do so, said Tim Novotny, spokesman for Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission.

“When they did get out, some of them had to stay out a little longer because of the weather. The difficulty is once you’re out at sea, they can handle a lot of conditions. But the trouble is trying to get back across those bars,” Novotny said.

A bar is an area near the coast where a river — in this case the Yaquina River — meets the sea. The force of the river water colliding with the ocean can create hazardous currents and swells, particularly during a storm. The Yaquina Bay bar is considered one of the more dangerous ones along the Oregon coast. On Wednesday, reports showed waves 16 feet tall there.

It’s so treacherous that the dangers of crossing it with a fully loaded crab boat were the premise of a spin-off of the “The Deadliest Catch,” a reality TV show about commercial fishermen that aired on the Discovery channel.

“The fishermen and their families know all too well, unfortunately, that that danger is real. They accept the challenge because they love what they do,” Novotny said. “It’s part of who they are and

what they do.”

The appeal also lies in the money that the succulent Dungeness crabs can bring.

Live Oregon Dungeness crabs are currently selling for anywhere between \$5.99 a pound and \$11.99 a pound, depending on location, and they are a staple of the holidays for many on the West Coast. The crabs are also fished in California and Washington.

Crabbing permits are capped at 424 vessels spread over six major ports running the length of the Oregon coast, from Astoria in the north to Brookings near the California border. Three-quarters of the harvest is brought in in the first eight weeks of the season, which usually runs from December to August.

The 10-year average haul for Dungeness crab in Oregon is 16 million pounds, but last year crabbers brought in 23 million pounds. That haul was worth more than \$74 million at the docks and pumped \$150 million into the state and local economy, Novotny said.

STATE BRIEFING

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife starts killing sea lions in Willamette Riv.

PORTLAND (AP) — Oregon wildlife officials have started killing sea lions that threaten a fragile run of winter steelhead in the Willamette River.

Oregon Public Broadcasting reports the state Department of Fish and Wildlife obtained a federal permit in November to kill up to 93 California sea lions per year below Willamette Falls south of Portland.

Department program manager Bryan Wright says the state plans to kill about 40 sea lions that frequent the falls by May.

He says the number of sea lions that return to the river should drop to single digits following the killings.

Officials have so far killed three of the animals. Wildlife officials relocated about a dozen sea lions to the coast last year, but the animals ended up swimming back to Willamette Falls.

Blumenauer wants feds to regulate marijuana the same way as alcohol

PORTLAND (AP) — A bill introduced by U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, a Democrat from Oregon, seeks to regulate marijuana like alcohol.

The bill introduced Wednesday would take marijuana off the federal controlled substances list and establish a nationally regulated industry overseen by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Blumenauer has long advocated legalizing marijuana at the federal level.

He authored a blueprint last year for his like-minded congress members on how to achieve that goal now that the House of Representatives has a Democratic majority.

The bill number for the so-called Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol Act is H.R. 420.

That’s a tongue-in-cheek reference to 420, a slang term frequently used to reference marijuana.

Blumenauer is founder and co-chair of the Congressional Cannabis Caucus.

Pendleton officials optimistic about growth potential for drone testing

By Antonio Sierra
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — While there may have been times that the future of the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range was uncertain, city officials suggested that 2018 provided evidence of the range’s permanency.

Steve Chrisman, Pendleton airport manager and economic development director, admitted that the range’s impact wasn’t always a known quantity, but a year’s worth of growth in activity and full-time jobs is a sign that the range has long-term potential.

The Federal Aviation Administration, the government agency that regulates the range, is also high on the UAS industry’s potential.

In a recent forecast, the FAA predicted “phenomenal” growth for the commercial drone sector and anticipated the number of commercial UAS would go from 110,604 at the end of 2017 to 451,800 in 2022.

“As non-model aircraft become operationally more efficient and safe, battery life expands, and regulatory constraints are reduced, new business models will begin to develop, thus enhancing robust supply-side responses,” the forecast states.

City officials believe that Pendleton has put itself in a good position to take advantage of these trends, and the range has already met or is on its way to meeting some of its goals.

The range got money from the state to build a new han-

gar, and in order to have \$1 million in loans forgiven, it will need to generate 165,000 in total labor hours at the range by April 2022.

Having already recorded nearly 20,000 labor hours going into 2018, range officials projected 35,000 hours by the end of the year. Range Manager Darryl Abling now says the range will surpass 60,000 labor hours in 2018 alone.

Opinion was split about Chrisman’s September prediction in a city council meeting that the range would generate \$1 million in revenue by the end of the fiscal year in June.

Chrisman wasn’t ready to reaffirm his prediction, but Abling thought the range could do it.

Revenue will be important for the range going forward as a grant covering the two range employees’ salaries will expire next year. Chrisman said he expects the revenue the range generates from services will cover that expense.

Much of the activity at the range has centered around big clients like PAE and A3, the Airbus subsidiary that started testing its air taxi project this year.

Chrisman said these companies and others like them are beginning to convert transient positions into permanent ones based in Pendleton.

Although many of these new employees come from elsewhere, Chrisman highlighted a former test range intern who was able to secure a job with PAE after a

stint in the Oregon National Guard.

“We’ll have more interns and push them through the pipeline,” Abling said.

While city officials have long touted the drone companies’ impact on local restaurants and hotels, Chrisman said other businesses are seeing a benefit.

Renovations and maintenance to the company’s facilities means more work for cleaners, electricians, and welders. More operations mean drone testers need to hire plane and helicopter pilots. Abling said 2019 should see tests from some of the range’s original customers, like the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and relatively newer clients like Cubic Corp., a San Diego-based defense and transportation contractor that recently rented a hangar at the Pendleton airport.

Hangar space is at a premium at the airport, and the question remains who will pay for them.

The city is still waiting on word about a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to build new hangars, and Chrisman said drone technology is still too new for companies to be willing to privately invest in hangars themselves.

Regardless of some of the open questions, Abling is optimistic about the range’s future.

“In five years, it’s going to look amazing,” he said.

**GRUMPY'S**
Repair Inc.
IT'S ONLY A NAME

“You’ll love the work we do. I guarantee it.” - JR

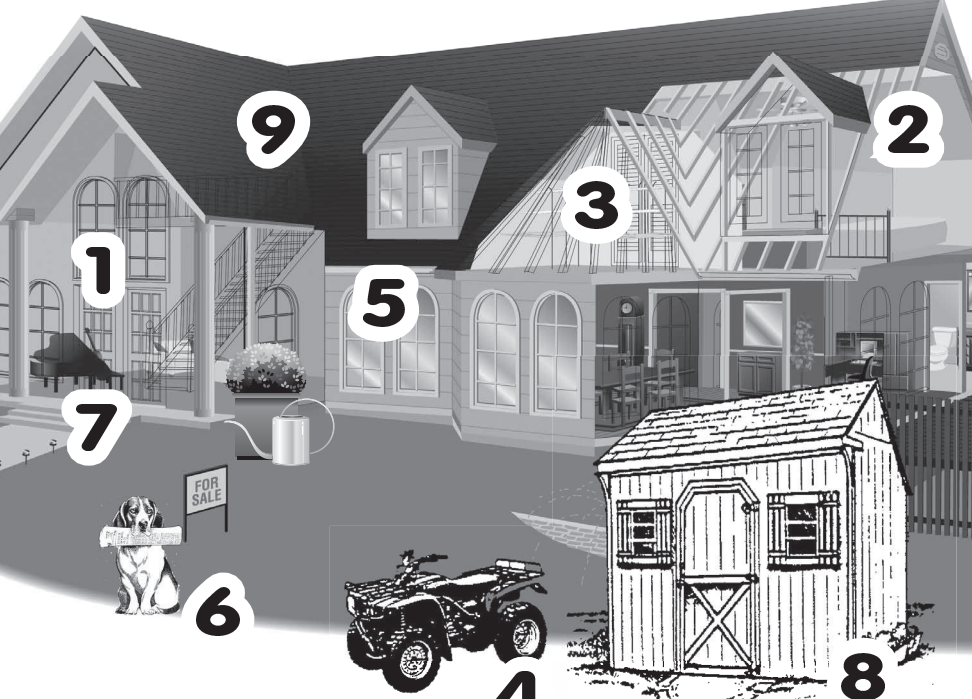
**REPAIR TRUCKS**
541-523-3200

**ASE**
Certified Technician



225 H Street • East of I-84 • 541-523-3200 • grumpysrepair.com

DREAM HOME



Electrical By: Eastern Oregon Electric, Inc. Brent Joseph, owner CCB 151441 541-523-9176 1	Insurance from  State Farm <i>Gregg Hinrichsen</i> 1722 Campbell 541-523-7778 2	Lumber by: Miller’s Lumber & Truss Lighting & Cabinets 3815 Pocahontas 541-523-6404 3 
ATVs From: Cliff’s Saws & Cycles 2619 10th St, Baker City 541-523-2412 4 	Vinyl Windows by: NeHi Enterprises 2122 10th Street 541-523-6008 ccb# 155399 5	Paper Delivered by Baker City Herald 1915 First Street 541-523-3673 <i>Call to have your home related business added to this ad monthly</i> 6
Garage Door by: NeHi Enterprises 2122 10th Street 541-523-6008 ccb# 155399 7	Storage Building from Countryside Sheds www.countrysidesheds.com Shop Display: 10102 S. McAllister Rd., Island City 800-682-0589 • 541-663-0246 (across from D&B Supply) 8	Roof By: D&H Roofing & Construction Inc. <i>Locally owned & operated</i> Baker City • 541-524-9594 CCB 192854 9 

Do you have a business to help our readers build or maintain a “dream” home?

Call 541-523-3673 to ask about advertising in this space!