

Deaths tied to Northwest's unprecedented heat wave

■ Officials say about a dozen deaths in Oregon, Washington linked to hot weather

By Nicholas K. Geranios and Andrew Selsky
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — About a dozen deaths in Washington and Oregon may be tied to an intense heat wave that brought scorching temperatures to the Northwest and caused one power utility to impose rolling blackouts amid heavy demand.

The dangerous weather that gave Seattle and Portland consecutive days of record high temperatures exceeding 100 degrees Fahrenheit eased in those cities on Tuesday, June 29. But inland Spokane, towns in Eastern Oregon and cities in Idaho saw temperatures spike.

The National Weather Service said the mercury reached 109 on Tuesday in Spokane — the highest temperature ever recorded there.

About 9,300 Avista Utilities customers in Spokane lost power on Monday and the company said more planned blackouts began on Tuesday afternoon in the city of about 220,000 people.

"We try to limit outages to one hour per customer," said Heather Rosentrater, an Avista vice president for energy delivery.

She said about 2,400 customers were without power as of shortly after 2 p.m. Tuesday, mostly on the north side of the city, and those customers had been alerted about the planned outage. About 21,000 customers were warned Tuesday morning that they might experience an outage, she said.

Rosentrater said the outages were a distribution problem, and did not stem from a lack of electricity in the system.

Meanwhile, authorities said multiple recent deaths in the region were possibly related to the scorching weather.

The King County Medical Examiner's office said two people died due to hyperthermia, meaning their bodies had become dangerously overheated. The Seattle Times reported they were a 65-year-old Seattle woman and a 68-year-old



Mark Graves/The Oregonian

As a heat wave cooked Portland on Friday, June 25, 2021, people took to the Willamette River for relief.

"Anybody ever believe you'd turn on the news and see it's 116 degrees in Portland, Oregon? But don't worry — there is no global warming because it's just a figment of our imaginations."

— President Joe Biden

Enumclaw, Washington, woman.

And the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office on Tuesday told the Daily Herald in Everett, Washington, that three men — ages 51, 75 and 77 — died after experiencing heat stroke in their homes.

They were from Everett, Granite Falls and Marysville in Washington.

The heat may have claimed the life of a worker on a nursery in Oregon, the state's worker safety agency, known as Oregon OSHA, said on Tuesday.

The man who died was from Guatemala and had apparently arrived in the United States only a few months ago, said Andres Pablo Lucas, owner of Brother Farm Labor Contractor that provided workers for the nursery, including the man who died.

The man, whose name was not disclosed, died at Ernst Nursery and Farms, a wholesale supplier in St. Paul, 20 miles north of Salem, on Saturday amid sweltering temperatures. An Oregon OSHA database listed the

death as heat-related.

"The employee was working on a crew moving irrigation lines. At the end of the shift he was found unresponsive in the field," said agency spokesman Aaron Corvin.

Speaking in Spanish, Pablo Lucas said when workers gathered together shortly after noon Saturday, they noticed one of them was missing. They began searching and found his body. Pablo Lucas said he didn't remember the man's name.

Pablo Lucas said the laborers often have the option to start working near sunrise when it is cooler and can stop around midday, but some want to stay regardless of the heat.

"The people want to work, to fight to succeed," he said. "For that reason, they stay."

Officials in Bremerton, Washington, said heat may have contributed to four deaths in that Puget Sound city. But Vince Hlavaty, Bremerton's medical officer, told the Kitsap Sun that firefighters cannot say definitively whether the heat was the cause of death.

In Bend, Oregon, authorities said the deaths of two homeless people in extreme heat may have been weather-related.

The United Farm Workers urged Washington Gov. Jay Inslee to immediately issue emergency heat standards protecting all farm and other outdoor workers in the state with a strong agricultural sector.

Several cities in Idaho also topped 100 on Tuesday with the hottest spot in Lewiston where the temperature reached 115.

President Joe Biden, during an infrastructure speech in Wisconsin, took note of the Northwest as he spoke about the need to be prepared for extreme weather.

"Anybody ever believe you'd turn on the news and see it's 116 degrees in Portland, Oregon? 116 degrees," the president said, working in a dig at those who cast doubt on the reality of climate change. "But don't worry — there is no global warming because it's just a figment of our imaginations."

The heat wave was caused by what meteorologists described as a dome of high pressure over the Northwest and worsened by human-caused climate change, which is making such extreme weather events more likely and more intense.

CHAMPIONS

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Stadler won the 100 backstroke her freshman year in 2019, and the 100 butterfly as a sophomore in 2020.

Though facing a smaller pool of talent this year with just members of the 4A conference (state swim meets normally consist of 1A-4A competitors), Stadler went into the state meet with no expectations.

"This was the first meet that times actually would count for USA Swimming and for colleges because the other ones for high school weren't actually sanctioned, I was just kind of wanting to see where I was at," Stadler said.

After competing with her teammates in the 200 medley relay, finishing fifth alongside graduates Salena Bott, Avril Zickgraf and her fellow incoming seniors Caitlin Lien and Sydney Lamb, Stadler moved onto her next event, the 200 individual medley.

Going back and forth with senior Malia Hewitt of Sweet Home, Stadler touched the wall four-tenths of a second ahead.

"I almost lost that one," Stadler said. "There was this girl (Hewitt) that raced it last year, and she ended up with a faster time last year than my PR's. I was ahead of her in the butterfly and the backstroke, but I am not really good at the breaststroke so she passed me on that. She was really good and it was a really close race at the end," Stadler said.

Excited about her victory, Moe saw Stadler go into a brief moment of bliss, but immediately composed herself to cheer on the others.

"She is a really shy person, she never brags on herself, so you can see herself super happy, jumping up and down, but when she got back to the table, she got super quiet about it," Moe said.

Stadler knows how much each swimmer at the state meet has sacrificed in the water to be successful.

"That one (200 individual medley) was really exciting for me because I wasn't expecting to (win), but I also try to be respectful of the other athletes because I don't want to be overly excited when someone else might have not had the best swim," Stadler said.

Stadler returned to the pool to compete in the 100 butterfly — the same event she won in the 2020 state meet.

She maintained a sizeable lead for much of the race, winning by nearly two seconds over runner-up Layla Bretz of Newport.

"I was actually pretty far ahead, by the first wall I was either in first or really close to first," Stadler said.

After winning a single event in her first two trips to the state meet, Stadler had doubled her title total.

But she said this year felt different, in part because the experience wasn't new.

"Freshman year that was like my big, big one because I won the state record that year in our division, so that one was definitely more exciting," Stadler said. "I was happy but I was just mostly happy with my times, because place wise it wasn't as competitive (due to not competing against opponents from 1A-3A conferences)."

"I was really not expecting to PR because we haven't been swimming as much, and our season was a lot shorter, but I definitely did better than I thought I was going to," she said.

Now with one year left swimming for Baker, Stadler's main focus is improving her times as she works toward a goal of continuing her swimming career in college.

"I don't know exactly where I want to go (to college), I have been looking at a lot of the higher up D1 schools, but I need to have just a touch faster of times, which I think I can do by next year hopefully," she said.

Stadler said she was proud of her teammates' performances at the state meet as well.

Attorney for Grant County deputy, paid at least \$117,000 while on leave for investigation, threatens to sue to keep records secret

By Sean Hart
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — An attorney for the jail deputy recorded having sexual phone conversations with an inmate said there was no public interest in the matter and threatened to sue the county if records related to the investigation are released.

Dan Thenell, general counsel for the Fraternal Order of Police union, argued his clients, former deputy Abigail Mobley and her husband the undersheriff, had been "vilified" based on "false accusations." He made the statements at a name clearing hearing June 23 offered by the Grant County Court, which has indicated it plans to release records related to the case.

"(Mobley) has been the victim of a vicious campaign to defame her," Thenell said.

Thenell said there was no public interest in the records because Mobley resigned from her position at the sheriff's office and the only reason to release them would be to hurt her.

He said, if the county releases the records as planned, it would present his client in a false light, and he



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle

Attorney Dan Thenell, left, and Grant County Undersheriff Zach Mobley at a name clearing hearing June 23.

would have no choice but to pursue a legal remedy. (False light is a tort for which a lawsuit could be filed.)

Personnel discipline actions are conditionally exempt from disclosure under Oregon law — unless the public interest requires disclosure in the particular instance. Personnel investigations of public safety employees that do not result in discipline may not be disclosed — unless the public interest requires

disclosure, or the public body (in this case, the county court) determines that nondisclosure of the information would adversely affect the confidence of that body.

Mobley spent 21 months on administrative leave from March 2019 until she resigned in December 2020, costing county taxpayers between \$117,500 and \$149,000, amid investigations by Deschutes County Sheriff's Office, the Oregon

Department of Justice and Umatilla County Sheriff's Office.

DOJ officials determined through dozens of recorded jail calls that Mobley was having sexual conversations with former jail inmate Darren Mortimore but concluded there was not "a reasonable likelihood of proving beyond a reasonable doubt that Ms. Mobley committed the crime of custodial sexual misconduct."

Thenell said at the hearing that the inmate was an intelligent predator seeking out and abusing vulnerable women, including another former female sheriff's office employee.

He said Mobley had taken responsibility for her actions. He said she completed a diversion for a driving under the influence of intoxicants charge and completed inpatient treatment for alcoholism. "She was using alcohol to cope with the pressures of the job," he said.

Thenell said Umatilla County's investigation concluded that Mobley violated the terms of her employment but found no evidence of sexual contact or theft of drugs

from the evidence locker, which had been alleged by former deputy Tyler Smith. (The Eagle has not been able to verify this because those records have not yet been released.)

Thenell said most of the "false information" related to the case came from Smith and his girlfriend Haley Olson, each of whom has a federal lawsuit pending against the county.

Mobley did not speak at the hearing. After Thenell read prepared remarks, Grant County counsel Dominic Carollo asked why he opposed the disclosure of the records if they confirm everything he says.

Thenell said the information was "personal" and "embarrassing" and related to Mobley's "demons."

After the hearing, Carollo told the Eagle he could not yet release the records because Mobley has a pending temporary restraining order filed in circuit court to prevent the release of the records. That lawsuit had been on hold, pending the name clearing hearing.

"We don't think their lawsuit has merit," Carollo said but added the county has to balance the legal issues.

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