

The Bulletin

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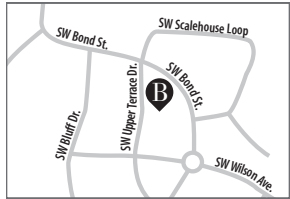
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Lottery results can now be found on the second page of Sports.

LOCAL, STATE & REGION

DESCHUTES COUNTY New COVID-19 cases per day

SOURCES: OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY, DESCHUTES COUNTY HEALTH SERVICES BULLETIN GRAPHIC

COVID-19 data for Wednesday, March 24:

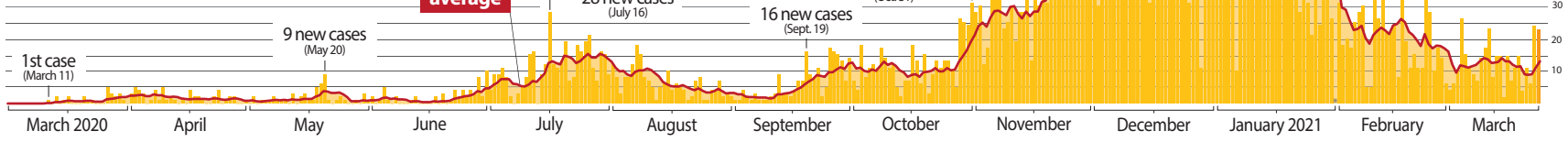
Deschutes County cases: 6,223 (23 new cases)
Deschutes County deaths: 70 (zero new deaths)

Crook County cases: 798 (zero new cases)
Crook County deaths: 18 (zero new deaths)

Jefferson County cases: 2,006 (1 new case)
Jefferson County deaths: 31 (zero new deaths)

Oregon cases: 162,384 (379 new cases)
Oregon deaths: 2,368 (1 new death)

COVID-19 patients hospitalized at St. Charles Bend on Wednesday: 1 (in ICU)



What is COVID-19? It's an infection caused by a new coronavirus. Symptoms (including fever, coughing and shortness of breath) can be severe. While some cases are mild, the disease can be fatal.

- 7 ways to help limit its spread:** 1. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. 2. Avoid touching your face. 3. Avoid close contact with sick people. 4. Stay home. 5. In public, stay 6 feet from others and wear a cloth face covering or mask. 6. Cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue or cough into your elbow. 7. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Dust explosion blamed for death at Silverton-area seed business

BY GEORGE PLAVEN

Capital Press

SILVERTON — A dust explosion likely caused a fire at a seed cleaning facility Tuesday near Silverton, killing one worker and injuring another, according to authorities.

Ed Grambusch, assistant chief of the Silverton Fire District, said the victim was a man in his 30s. He has not yet been identified. A second worker was also taken to an area hospital with injuries not considered life threatening.

The fire was reported shortly after 9 a.m. at Riches Seeds. Upon arrival, Grambusch said flames and heavy dark smoke were showing from the roof of the two-story building.

Managers on site told firefighters that one person was still on the second floor. Crews were able to get the fire under control in about an hour, Grambusch said. The man was found dead inside. His name is being withheld until next of kin are notified.

While Grambusch said investigators still do not know what the ignition source was, they are pretty sure a dust explosion is what caused the fire. Dust explosions can be a hazard in seed plants and grain silos, occurring when fine particles in the air combust in a massive fireball.

Grambusch said the building was destroyed, with damages totaling in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. A message left with Riches Seeds was not immediately returned.



Silverton Fire District via Capital Press

A dust explosion likely caused a fire at a seed cleaning facility Tuesday near Silverton that killed one worker and injured another, according to authorities.

New lawsuit filed over spotted owl

Associated Press

Environmental groups have filed a lawsuit seeking to preserve protections for 3.4 million acres of northern spotted owl habitat from the U.S.-Canada border to Northern California, the latest salvo in a legal battle over logging in federal old-growth forests that are nesting grounds for the species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service cut the amount of protected federal old-growth forest by one-third in the final days of the Trump administration, a move that was cheered by the timber industry.

"Even though there's a decent indication that the (Biden) administration is taking a second look, we didn't want to leave any room for error," said Susan Jane Brown of the Western Environmental Law Center, a plaintiff in the lawsuit filed Tuesday in Portland.

Timber interests, including the American Forest Resource Council, filed a lawsuit earlier this month challenging the delay in implementing the new, reduced habitat protections.

OREGON LEGISLATURE | MEASURE 11 HEARING

Lawmakers debate changes to mandatory minimum sentences

BY NOELLE CROMBIE

The Oregonian

Opposing sides offered a distillation Tuesday of the debate over Measure 11 in the first legislative hearing on a bill that would remove mandatory minimum sentencing requirements for violent crimes in Oregon except murder.

Senate Bill 401 — sponsored by Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee — is one of four bills filed this session that would upend the state's longstanding, voter-approved sentencing law.

Prozanski said at a news conference that he wants his bill to be "seriously considered as the vehicle" for Measure 11 reforms this session, though he said the others remain under consideration as well.

SB 401 would convert mandatory minimum sentences into presumptive ones that judges could either add onto or reduce depending on certain factors.

Nearly half of the estimated 12,500 inmates in the state prison system are serving Measure 11 sentences.

Prozanski's bill would give

prisoners sentenced under the proposed law the chance to earn credit toward early release by taking part in treatment and other prison programs. Under Measure 11, offenders serve the full sentence with no chance for early release.

Proponents of doing away with mandatory minimum sentences said the approach is outdated, invests too much power in prosecutors and contributes to prison population growth as well as racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system.

District attorneys represent the most public opposition to the proposed changes. They argue that the most serious crimes deserve consistent and reliable sentences, that mandatory minimum sentences have made Oregon safer and that crime victims are entitled to the certainty that comes with mandatory sentencing.

During his testimony, Washington County District Attorney Kevin Barton cited a handful of prosecutions involving Measure 11 offenses.

He said his interpretation of Prozanski's bill is that mandatory minimum sentences

would become the maximum sentence a judge can hand down. As a result, he said, people convicted of violent crimes would likely end up with shorter sentences, he said.

"I think of the actual cases that I have personally and directly handled," he said. "When I hear of assault in the first-degree, I think about a baby who received a brain injury after her father intentionally suffocated her and a mother who continued to send me pictures of that victim child years after the trial occurred and years after he was sentenced to his Measure 11 time."

Prozanski took a dim view of prosecutors' opposition to what he characterized as "reasonable reform," framing the criticism as a self-serving power play.

"It's pure power and control," he said. "That is what it comes down to because they are in the catbird seat."

Some district attorneys have broken with the rest and support SB 401. The elected prosecutors in Deschutes, Wasco and Multnomah counties all testified on behalf of Prozanski's legislation. They said they want to see judges invested with more authority and discretion over sentencing based on the facts of each case, not a one-size-fits-all policy.

Multnomah County District Attorney Mike Schmidt told lawmakers that he's "deeply troubled" by the law, which he said was passed in "an era when many now misguided practices were ascendant in the criminal justice system," such as the war on drugs.

"We've learned that much of what we believed was true 27 years ago was not only untrue but actively harmful, creating deep systems of inequity that we're still wrestling with today," he said.

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