

# The Bulletin

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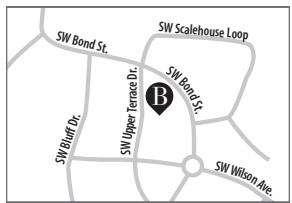
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**NEWSROOM FAX**

541-385-5804

**OUR ADDRESS**

Street ..... 320 SW Upper Terrace Drive  
Suite 200  
Bend, OR 97702  
Mailing ..... P.O. Box 6020  
Bend, OR 97708



**ADMINISTRATION**

**Publisher**  
Heidi Wright ..... 541-383-0341  
**Editor**  
Gerry O'Brien ..... 541-633-2166

**DEPARTMENT HEADS**

**Advertising**  
Brian Naplachowski ..... 541-383-0370  
**Circulation/Operations**  
Jeremy Feldman ..... 541-617-7830  
**Finance**  
Anthony Georger ..... 541-383-0324  
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City Julie Johnson ..... 541-383-0367  
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News Tim Doran ..... 541-383-0360  
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## LOCAL, STATE & REGION

### STATE BRIEFING

#### Fire destroys apartments in Portland; 2 dead

Two people died and four were injured in a northeast Portland apartment fire early Sunday, according to Portland Fire & Rescue. The fire was reported just after 3:30 a.m., and responding firefighters found two apartment buildings in flames. The fire was quickly upgraded to a four-alarm fire, drawing a larger response. The two apartment buildings were destroyed in the fire. A third building in the same apartment complex was partially damaged, but crews were able to prevent further damage to the third building, said Terry

Foster, a spokesperson for Portland Fire & Rescue. Portland Police homicide and arson detectives were on the scene Sunday morning. Foster said the cause of the fire is under investigation. The two people who died in the fire have not been identified.

#### Body of man who drowned rescuing his child is found

The body of a Junction City man was recovered Friday, three days after he jumped into a Lane County reservoir to help one of his children. Kevin Carlile, 38, was found shortly before 1 p.m. in the Fern Ridge Reservoir, south of where he had jumped in Tues-



The Oregonian

#### Two apartment buildings caught fire in a four-alarm blaze in northeast Portland on Sunday.

day. The Lane County Sheriff's Office said Carlile and his wife had been boating when one of their children ended up in the

water without a life jacket. Both adults jumped in to help the child, but the high winds and choppy water kept

the family from getting back to the boat, sheriff's deputies said. Carlile's wife and children were able to swim back to shore, but Carlile was last seen about 150 yards out in the water near the dam, along the north side of the reservoir. Deputies said they did not believe Carlile was wearing a life jacket.

#### Note about COVID-19 data

The Oregon Health Authority is no longer issuing COVID-19 updates on weekends or holidays. The chart and information tracking Central Oregon COVID-19 cases will return Wednesday. —Bulletin staff and wire reports

### Heat wave

# 'WE DON'T WANT MORE DEATH; WE DON'T WANT MORE SADNESS'

Man who yearned to become a parent died while working to provide Oregonians with food and shade

BY APRIL RUBIN

The Oregonian

Sebastian Francisco Perez, a Guatemalan immigrant to Marion County, was working hard and saving money to become a father.

He arrived in the U.S. on May 5 to work at Ernst Nursery and Farms in rural St. Paul so he could fund his wife's fertility treatment in Guatemala, said Reyna Lopez, executive director of PCUN. He died less than two months later, on June 26, while working at the tree farm during the Pacific Northwest's unprecedented heat wave.

Perez was one of 174,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers in Oregon who have worked through heat, cold, wildfires and the pandemic this year to feed the country. Farmworker advocates said his preventable death should serve as a local and national call to action.

At three vigils Saturday in St. Paul, Portland and Hermiston, community members grieved and celebrated 38-year-old Perez's memory and called for justice in his honor. Perez's mother and wife joined the Portland vigil via video call from Ixcán, Guatemala. They thanked activists for their work and community members for their presence.

"We don't want more of our family members to go through this," said Perez's wife, Maria Lucas Alonzo. "We don't want more death. ... We don't want more sadness."

Organizations including PCUN, the Oregon's farmworker union; the Latino Network, a nonprofit organization; Causa, an immigrant rights organization; and United Farm Workers, a national farmworker union, organized the vigils and demanded action from Oregon's government.

Among their calls are that farmworkers be provided shaded break areas, cool and clean water, heat-illness prevention programming, protections against retaliation and an end to work when temperatures exceed 90 degrees.

Although they never met, Ramiro Navarro Jr. was devastated at Perez's loss, which hit close to home. Navarro used to work at the same nursery as Perez with his grandfather. He said he understands choosing to work in dangerous conditions to support family rather than taking unpaid time off.

"It's a choice that many will make over and over again in the same way that Sebastian made until we fix the broken system that puts people in a position to have to make that choice," he said.

Lauro Mendoza, who has worked as a farmworker in Oregon since moving from Oaxaca, Mexico, in 1986, said



Sean Meagher/The Oregonian photos

#### A vigil is held Saturday for Sebastian Francisco Perez, a farmworker who died amid the historic heat wave that blanketed Oregon last week, at Ernst Nursery and Farms in St. Paul in Marion County.



#### A large crowd turned out to remember Sebastian Francisco Perez.

he has seen farmers and contractors abuse their power over workers in vulnerable circumstances like Perez's. He said workers, through the support of unions, should stand up to authority and demand better practices.

Oregon's Occupational Safety and Health agency and the Oregon Health Authority were directed to develop a proposal for worker safety in March of last year. The deadline was extended to September because of the pandemic, which meant no specific regulations were in place for the late June heat, which reached a high of 116 degrees in the Portland area.

Emergency protections are needed to prevent another death like Perez's, said Isa Peña, interim executive director of Causa Oregon. Farmworkers have provided what the country needs for decades, but the country's leaders have not shown up for them through policy or immigration reform, she said.

"Our communities are essential," she said. The life expectancy of a farmworker in the U.S. is 49 years, compared to 77 for most Americans, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Farmworkers are exposed to harsh, hazardous

"It's a choice that many will make over and over again in the same way that Sebastian made until we fix the broken system that puts people in a position to have to make that choice."

— Ramiro Navarro Jr., who once worked at the same nursery as Perez

the only low-paid workers in Oregon who don't get extra hourly compensation when they are required to work extra-long hours.

"We are asking, demanding that Oregon, the Guatemalan government, contractors, farmers, farmworkers unions, labor unions, that we all unite



#### A vigil participant holds a sign that says in Spanish that few people would eat without farmworkers.

to take care of our communities, especially in these extreme conditions that will continue," said Lopez, the farmworkers union director.

Guatemala lost a son, said Martha Guembes Herrera, honorary consul of Guatemala in Oregon. She said she's working with Perez's family to return his body to his home country. A fundraiser created to support the mourning family raised about \$10,000 as of Saturday afternoon.

Indigenous, Catholic and Quaker spiritual leaders said prayers for Perez in St. Paul, acknowledging that his loss should have been prevented.

"Today we remember his life," said the Rev. Samuel Moran, a Guatemalan pastor at Ministerios Restauración congregation in Portland. "Let the lessons we're learning from his life benefit all workers in the field."

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## TWO BIG WEEKENDS: JULY 9-11 & 16-18

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