

The Bulletin

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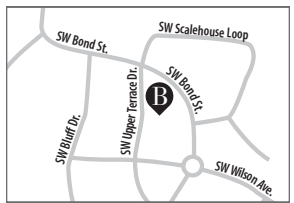
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LOCAL, STATE & REGION

COVID-19 data for Thursday, July 29

Deschutes County cases: 10,528 (36 new cases)
Deschutes County deaths: 87 (zero new deaths)
Crook County cases: 1,392 (7 new cases)
Crook County deaths: 24 (zero new deaths)

Jefferson County cases: 2,493 (4 new cases)
Jefferson County deaths: 42 (zero new deaths)
Oregon cases: 218,689 (1,026 new cases)
Oregon deaths: 2,855 (6 new deaths)
COVID-19 patients hospitalized at St. Charles Bend on Thursday: 20 (4 in ICU)

The Bulletin had been tracking the seven-day average case count based on state data since local coronavirus cases were first reported in March of last year. Starting with the July Fourth weekend, the state stopped providing county-level data for weekends or holidays. When data is available, The Bulletin will continue to publish information about the pandemic.

OFF THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COAST

Parents to sue a year after 9 troops died

BY JULIE WATSON

Associated Press

OCEANSIDE, Calif. — The families of eight Marines and one sailor who died when their amphibious assault vehicle sank off the Southern California coast last summer plan to sue the manufacturer of the vehicle that resembles an armored seafaring tank, their lawyers announced Thursday, a day before the anniversary of the accident.

BAE Systems knew for a decade or more about a design defect that makes it nearly impossible for troops to open the cargo hatches and escape the 26-ton amphibious vehicles when they sink, attorney Eric Dubin said at a news conference in Oceanside, the city bordering Camp Pendleton Marine Corps base, where most of the troops were based.

“They were kids, and they were put in a death trap,” said Dubin, who was accompanied by relatives of five of the service members who died on July 30, 2020, and ranged from 18 to 22.

Dubin added that the troops were trapped inside for 45 minutes before the vehicle, known as an AAV, sank. Four Marines tried to use their body weight to force the hatch open, the lawyers said, adding that if the doors went inward and locked instead of to the outside, they could have gotten out in under two minutes.

He said the lawsuit would be filed within two days in U.S. District Court in San Diego.

Among those killed was Jack Ryan Ostrovsky, 21, of Bend.

Military leaders agreed the tragedy could have been prevented. An investigation by the maritime branch found the accident off San Clemente Island was caused by inadequate training, shabby maintenance



Mothers of U.S. service members — Marine Lance Cpl. Chase Sweetwood, Pfc. Evan Bath and Marine Lance Cpl. Marco Barranco — embrace each other at a news conference Thursday next to a picture of Sweetwood in Oceanside, California.

of the 35-year-old amphibious assault vehicles and poor judgment by commanders.

About a dozen Marine officers have been forced out of their jobs or disciplined in another way. The Marine Corps also relieved a two-star general in June who had overseen the exercise.

BAE Systems declined to comment on the expected lawsuit and directed questions to the Marine Corps.

“We offer our deepest

sympathies to the families impacted by this tragedy and we mourn the loss of the nine service members,” company spokesman Tim Paynter wrote in an email.

Lawyers for the families said they also would have considered suing the military but were prevented by the Feres doctrine, a 1950 decision that says service members cannot sue the federal government for injuries sustained while serving.

Instead, they are asking the military to support the lawsuit

and pull its amphibious assault vehicles out of the water until the problem is resolved by the manufacturer. The Marine Corps did that for months while the accident was investigated, but recently troops have been back inside them in the water.

The troops who died were inside a decades-old amphibious vehicle, but lawyers said the newer ones, including a line now in production, have the same issue, which is why they are suing.

BAE Systems has a \$366 million contract with the Marine Corps to produce 72 amphib-

ious combat vehicles, which will replace the AAVs.

The Marine Corps said in a statement that “a comprehensive review of amphibious operations is being conducted by senior Marine Corps and Navy personnel” and that it is taking numerous actions to improve safety standards, including training troops to escape amphibious vehicles and ensuring the units using them are proficient in their skills. But it stopped short of saying it would stop using the AAVs.

It said it continues to mourn the loss of troops and is making safety a priority.



Jack Ryan Ostrovsky, of Bend

LOCAL BRIEFING

One dead in multivehicle wreck south of Madras

A person died in a vehicle wreck Thursday afternoon on U.S. Highway 97 between SW Jericho and SW Iris lanes several miles south of Madras, Jefferson County Sheriff Marc Heckathorn confirmed.

The multivehicle crash oc-

curred around 1:30 p.m. Highway traffic was backed up in both directions for several hours.

A request for information from Oregon State Police, the lead investigating agency, was not immediately returned.

Jefferson County District Attorney Steve Leriche was at the scene.

Highway 97 between Madras and Redmond is notoriously deadly, said Heckathorn.

Thousands without power in Bend after lightning

Around 11,000 Pacific Power customers lost power in Deschutes County following lightning strikes early Thurs-

day evening, but power was restored to most quickly.

By 5:30 p.m., the power company's outage map showed crews were responding to four separate outages in Bend affecting just 3,500 homes. Another in Redmond was shown as affecting one customer. The power company later showed the Bend outage affecting 1,500

homes. Customers were being told by text to expect their power to be restored by 8 p.m.

The outages knocked out traffic lights at U.S. Highway 97 and Cooley Road north of Bend, slowing rush-hour drivers, according to the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office.

— Bulletin staff reports

Free entrance at national parks, other public lands set for Aug. 4

BY JAMIE HALE

The Oregonian

A new fee-free day is beginning this year at national parks and other federal lands in the Pacific Northwest and across the country, celebrating

last year's passage of the Great American Outdoors Act.

Starting this year, every Aug. 4 will be celebrated as Great American Outdoors Day.

In Oregon, it will mean free entrance to national park sites

like Crater Lake National Park and Lewis and Clark National Historical Park, as well as several BLM sites that charge day-use fees including Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area on the Oregon Coast.

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