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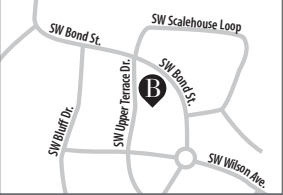
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LOCAL, STATE & REGION

LOCAL BRIEFING



La Pine Rural Fire Protection District

Two firefighters in La Pine were injured rescuing two cats from a burning home Wednesday. The tenant escaped through the bedroom window, but several other cats are feared dead.

Redmond motorcyclist dies in crash with SUV near Tumalo

A Redmond motorcyclist died Wednesday night after crashing into an SUV near Tumalo.

Quinn Chastain, 30, died at the scene.

According to police, Chastain was riding north on the Old Bend-Redmond Highway near 94th Street about 8 p.m. Investigators determined he was traveling "at a high rate of speed and passing in designated no passing zones" when he struck a Lexus SUV that was pulling onto the highway from a driveway.

According to crash investigators from the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office and Oregon State Police, the SUV driver did not see the motorcycle. The SUV driver remained on scene and was cooperative, according to police.

The Old Bend-Redmond Highway was closed for almost five hours while the crash was being investigated.

2 firefighters injured saving cats

Firefighters in La Pine rescued two cats after responding to a structure fire, but several other cats are feared dead.

Two firefighters were injured while saving the cats from the burning house, the La Pine Rural Fire Protection District said Thursday in a news release.

On Wednesday about 7 p.m., firefighters responded to a fire at 15163 Ponderosa Loop, the fire district said in the news release.

When firefighters arrived, they found the only occupant of the manufactured home had escaped through the bedroom window, the release said. The home was badly damaged by the flames, and up to 14 cats were inside.

"Firefighters were able to reach through windows and rescue two cats, however the fate of the others are currently unknown and due to the significant damage are believed to have perished in the fire," the release said.

Poverty Simulation event coming to Redmond May 20

Redmond residents are invited to participate in Poverty Simulation on May 20, an event designed to show the general community the realities of poverty.

The event, which is being hosted by the nonprofit Rogue Retreat, will simulate how difficult everyday tasks and responsibilities are when living under the poverty line, according to the event's description.

Participants will attempt to accomplish tasks by visiting tables around a

room represented by service providers, government agencies and others with lived experience, according to Jim Cook, a Redmond homeless advocate.

"This simulation dramatically demonstrates how much time and energy many families have to give to survive from day to day," according to the event description. "It quickly dispels the myth that people would do fine if they would only go out and get a job!"

The event will be held at Mountainview Fellowship Church in Redmond between 8:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. The event is free and lunch will be provided. To volunteer or participate, people can visit the Poverty Simulation Eventbrite page or contact Oasis Village, a group of people trying to start a managed tiny-home village in Redmond, at info@oasisvillageor.org.

Local CDC community levels

The Bulletin is no longer publishing COVID-19 daily case counts by county.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention monitors community levels of COVID-19 to help communities decide what prevention steps to take based on the latest data. Levels can be low, medium or high and are determined by looking at hospital beds being used, hospital admissions and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in an area.

The CDC listed the following levels for Central Oregon:

Deschutes County: Medium
Precautions the CDC recommends for communities with medium levels:

- If you are at high risk for severe illness, talk to your health care provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions.
- Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines.
- Get tested if you have symptoms.

Crook County: Low
Jefferson County: Low
Precautions the CDC recommends for communities with low levels: Stay up to date on vaccines and get tested if you have symptoms.

— Bulletin staff reports

Cartel-funded pot farms expand to grow indoors

BY ANDREW SELSKY
Associated Press

Foreign drug cartels that established illegal outdoor marijuana farms in Oregon last year are expanding to large indoor grows, a state police official said Thursday.

The new challenge emerged as a task force created by the Legislature met for the first time to figure out how to combat cannabis-related problems, some of which threaten Oregon's legal, regulated recreational marijuana industry.

The Task Force on Cannabis-Derived Intoxicants and Illegal Cannabis Production is also responsible for recommending funding and command structure to enable law enforcement to combat illegal cannabis production, changes to state laws to address labor trafficking and water theft by the cartel-financed pot farms and regulations on genetic engineering of cannabis, among other issues.

"It started with a simple ask of help and it's turned into, 'Oh, my goodness, there's so much to deal with.' And so I think we just have to kind of take one at a time," said state Rep. Lily Morgan, a Republican from Grants Pass, as the task force met via video link.

One of the biggest problems is the recent proliferation of illegal, industrial-sized marijuana farms.

In early 2021, hundreds of greenhouses began cropping up in Southern Oregon's Josephine and Jackson counties — some within city limits, others brazenly established along highways or tucked into remote valleys.

They were not licensed by the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission and are financed by foreign criminal cartels, from Latin America, Europe and Asia, authorities have said. There were more pot farms than overwhelmed law enforcement officials

could take down. Indoor illegal growing operations have long existed, but now criminal gangs are pushing more in that direction, enabling them to grow year-round, a task force member said.

"We're starting to hear about Josephine County, a lot of operations moving indoors," said Oregon State Police Sgt. Tyler Bechtel. The state police have identified dozens of ethnic-based drug trafficking organizations, each operating between five and 30 marijuana grow sites, Bechtel said.

Giving an idea of the scope of the problem, the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission says 551,000 marijuana plants were seized in Jackson County, Josephine County and Deschutes County from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021. And that was a tiny fraction of the illegal crop. Authorities also seized almost \$3.4 million in cash in the raids.

"Despite legal avenues for purchases and sales of marijuana within Oregon, an illegal marijuana market continues to cause public safety concerns, including diversion of marijuana to other states, sales of marijuana to underage buyers, illegal cultivation of marijuana on private, state, and federal property, and enrichment of organized criminal operations," the commission said in a report.

The report examined results after an outlay of millions of dollars in grants to the three counties to address increasing unlawful marijuana cultivation and distribution operations in Oregon. The commission said it could not judge the effectiveness of the grant program "because the illegal marijuana market is an especially nebulous sector to evaluate."

The Task Force must provide its findings to an interim committee of the Legislature by Dec. 31, 2022.



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