

# Memorial weekend crash kills two motorcyclists, injures several others

'Heartbreaking on every side,' says Wheeler County sheriff

By Angel Carpenter  
Blue Mountain Eagle

A Memorial Day weekend crash killed two motorcyclists and seriously injured several other riders late Saturday night on Highway 19, in an area located just east of Fossil.

The crash happened when a vehicle traveling north on Highway 19 crossed into the oncoming lane of traffic, striking a large number of motorcycle riders who were southbound, authorities said.

Killed in the crash were Aaron Michael Polsfuss and Donald Robert Pratt, who died at the scene.

The driver of the vehicle, Lisa Ann Niehaus, was arrested and booked in jail on multiple charges, including two counts of criminally negligent homicide, three counts of assault in the third degree and several misdemeanors.

Wheeler County Sheriff Chris Humphreys, who said he was on the scene from the start, called it "horrific."

"It is definitely the worst in Wheeler County history," he said.

Several agencies responded to the crash at 10:40 p.m. Saturday near milepost 60, including ambulances from Spray, Fossil, Condon and Arlington. Four helicopters and a fixed-wing plane transported patients from



Contributed photo/Wheeler County Sheriff's Office

**A wreck near Fossil killed two motorcyclists Saturday evening, and injured others.**

the scene and from Asher Community Health Clinic in Fossil.

Volunteer medical crews and fire departments responded, along with Wheeler County Sheriff's office and Oregon State Police.

Highway 19 was closed for nearly nine hours as a local crane operator assisted in clearing the wreckage.

"I've seen some things in the 20 years that I've been doing this," Humphreys said. "It's heartbreaking on every side here. I'm in contact with the families, and it's heartbreaking for them."

He said first responders, mainly volunteers, took on a "gargantuan effort."

The motorcycle group, which are self-identified as members of the Gypsy Jokers Motorcycle Club, were headed to the 40th Fossil Motorcycle Campout at Bear Hollow Park south of Fossil. Humphreys said they believe more than 40 motorcyclists were riding together. He added that getting a full count was difficult.

A Grant County School District No. 3 bus driver, who didn't wish to be named, said

he was traveling toward Grant County with students on board the night of the crash. On Sunday, after hearing reports, he realized he missed the crash by about two minutes. He said the thought of how close they came to having the vehicle hit them, or possibly being in the middle of the crash, was sobering.

In addition to the two charges of criminally negligent homicide, Class B felonies, Niehaus was charged with three counts of assault in the third degree, Class C felonies, for unlawfully and recklessly causing serious physical injury by vehicle to Lucas Andre Mattern, James Loren Deen and Justin Lee Mac.

She was also charged with assault in the fourth degree for unlawfully and recklessly causing injury to David Frank McReynolds, Brandon Dennis Doeden and Pamela Rashelj "Duddles" Singer. Additional charges included one count of reckless driving, and three counts of recklessly endangering another person (McReynolds, Doeden and Singer) by driving into oncoming traffic.

# Eastern counties could see more land use autonomy

By Rylan Boggs  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Eastern Oregon counties may have a shot at creating their own land use laws.

Grant County Commissioner Boyd Britton updated the Grant County Court May 24 on a meeting he attended in Salem with Gov. Kate Brown, Sen. Ted Ferrioli and representatives from other counties in which they discussed Senate Bill 432 that could allow Eastern Oregon counties to write their own land use laws.

Still in its early life, the bill would give eastern counties more say in land-use designations. It would allow Eastern Oregon counties to opt out of the state's land use laws and establish their own, according to the Oregon State Legislature.

The bill's summary states it "allows (a) rural county with no population growth, and certain local governments in county, to adopt (a) comprehensive land use plan without complying with statewide land use planning goals."

Britton said different land use laws could benefit the counties, which have seen little growth in recent decades. Grant County is in better shape than others because of industrial land located within the county, he said.

Britton expressed faith in East Oregonians to come up with land use laws that fit their needs.

"I do believe the citizens of Grant County are smart enough that we can write our own plan to protect our most valuable industry, which is agriculture," he said.

Britton said the Oregon Farm Bureau was against it due to fears farm land would be taken over for housing and other uses.

During the meeting, the court also authorized the purchase of automated external defibrillators for the courthouse, library and airport. Four AEDs will be purchased for \$1,225 apiece from Heartsine Samaritan.

Local resident and Red Cross volunteer Jim Spell described the devices as "very necessary to have." Commissioner Boyd Britton expressed interest in providing training to employees on how to use the devices.

The court also heard from Corrections Manager Josh Wolf of the sheriff's department to use funds from the jail's expansion fund to hire an auditor and purchase a new air conditioning unit, washer and dryer for the jail.

Wolf had solicited bids for each, and the court gave him permission to move forward with a \$7,026 bid for an air condition-

ing unit from Tri County Equipment in La Grande, a \$12,566 bid from Dexter Laundry for a washer and dryer and a \$4,500 bid for an auditor from the state.

The court also:

- approved a contract with 12X & Costa Fighting Bulls to provide stock for the Grant County Fair.

- approved a \$207,000 liability insurance proposal for county vehicles and employees.

- approved a \$3,400 bid from Tri-County Equipment to repair the fairground's tractor.

- approved a resolution to receive funds from Business Oregon and pass them to Iron Triangle for a new biomass processing facility. A line item in the budget was also created for these funds.

- approved a request to remove a destroyed single wide trailer from the tax roll. The trailer, between Long Creek and Pendleton, had been destroyed but not removed from the tax roll.

- approved an intergovernmental agreement with the Burns Paiute Tribal Council to rent beds in the Grant County Jail when needed.

- approved a \$16,393 transfer from the Grant County Airport's contingency fund to fix runway lights.

# Sheriff's deputy hit by ricochet

Blue Mountain Eagle

A Grant County Sheriff's Office corrections deputy sustained a ricochet wound last week.

Deputy Samuel Stinnett was struck in the left

side of the chest by a small piece of bullet shrapnel that ricocheted off a steel target plate, according to Oregon State Police. Stinnett was shooting with another deputy about 3 p.m. on Thursday, May 26.

Stinnett was taken to Blue Mountain Hospital by the other deputy and was treated and released with a non life-threatening puncture wound. The incident was not found to be criminal in nature.

## COPS AND COURTS

Arrests and citations in the Blue Mountain Eagle are taken from the logs of law enforcement agencies. Every effort is made to report the court disposition of arrest cases.

### Grant County Sheriff

The Grant County Sheriff's Office reported the following for the week of May 18-24.

- Concealed handgun licenses: 5

- Average inmates: 14
- Bookings: 8
- Releases: 6
- Arrests: 1
- Citations: 2
- Fingerprints: 3
- Civil papers: 21
- Warrants processed: 5
- Asst./welfare check: 3
- Search and Rescue: 1

Charged Madison Duvall, 19, John Day, with harassment.

### Justice Court

The Grant County Justice Court reported the following fines and judgments:

No operator's license: Dillon Joseph Myers, 97, Mt. Vernon, May 2, fined \$260.

Violation of the speed limit: Erica Theresa Baldwin, 61, Talent, 83/55 zone, April 6, fined \$160.

Violation of the basic rule: Sally Deitchler, 62, Bend, 75/55, May 14, fined \$135; Mark R. Bey, 47, Ashland, 78/55 zone, fined \$220; Daniel N. Zundel, 49, Roseburg, 78/55, May 21, fined \$220; James Gregory Low,

69, Redmond, May 7, fined \$220; Dakota S. Emerson, 19, Monument, 71/55 zone, May 21, fined \$135; Christopher Charles Self, 36, Terrebonne, 78/55 zone, May 7, fined \$220; Garrett Lee Warner, 18, Monument, 61/45 zone, May 14, fined \$160.

Exceeding speed limit: Trista L. Cox, 34, John Day, 77/65 zone, May 7, fined \$220; Jeremiah Johnson Jones, 33, Albany, 85/65 zone, May 14, fined \$260.

Driving uninsured: Timothy L. Keith, 34, Canyon City, April 29, fined \$260.

Driving while suspended: Timothy L. Keith, 34, Canyon City, April 29, fined \$435; Chuck Wayne Adams, 47, Prineville, March 30, fined \$435.

Driving uninsured: Chuck Wayne Adams, 47, Prineville, March 30, fined \$260; Cory Allen Slayton, 25, John Day, May 1, fined \$260.

Operating without proper fenders: Cory Allen Slayton, 25, John Day, May 1, fined \$135.

Gloria Tirico v. Charles and Shiloe Lawrence. Money judgment awarded to Gloria Tirico for \$727.56.

Quick Collect Inc. v. Stephen Cross. Money judgment awarded to Quick Collect Inc. for \$650.50.

Ray Klein Inc. v. Valeen M. Madden. Money judgment awarded to Ray Klein Inc. for \$589.49.

Ray Klein Inc. v. Jason S. Dole. Money judgment awarded to Ray Klein Inc. for \$1,806.25.

Ray Klein Inc. v. Bria Dehaven. Money judgment awarded to Ray Klein Inc. for \$1,401.16.

Barbara Bryant v. Danetta Lewis. Money judgment awarded to Danetta Lewis for \$60.

### Dispatch

John Day dispatch worked 183 calls during the week of May 22-29. Along with the various traffic warnings, trespassing, injured animals, noise complaints and juvenile complaints, these calls included:

- **John Day Police Department**

May 23: Responded to a report of a vehicle hitting a fire hydrant near Ace Hardware and driving off. Received a report of a young girl screaming for help on Charolais Heights. Arrested a 31-year-old John Day resident for reckless driving.

May 26: Advised of a vehicle belonging to a Grant County resident that was found stripped and abandoned in Washington. Responded to a report of an intoxicated subject in John Day.

May 29: Responded with the Grant County Sheriff's Office to a report of a domestic disturbance in John Day.

- **Grant County Sheriff's Office**

May 22: Dispatched to a report of a suspicious subject in Canyon City Park. Dispatched to a report of a suspicious subject on Inland Street in Canyon City.

May 24: Responded to a report of a domestic disturbance in Mt. Vernon. Responded with John Day Police and Oregon State Police to a burglary in progress on Highway 395. Responded to a report of a domestic disturbance in Mt. Vernon.

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May 25: Responded with Oregon State Police to a report of a man trying to put his arm in a wood splitter. Received a report of a 14-year-old girl who did not return home from school.

May 26: Responded to a non-injury rollover crash on Highway 395. Notified of a

male racing a motorcycle with children on it.

- **John Day ambulance**

May 26: Responded to a 30-year-old male with a gunshot wound.



May 28: Responded to a 60-year-old man who was involved in an ATV accident.

- **Oregon Department of Transportation**

May 24: Advised of a tree down across Highway 395.

## Michael Rushton, DPM

**Podiatric Physician & Surgeon**

**po.di.a.try**  
n. The study and treatment of foot ailments (po-di'a.trist.n.)

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541-524-0122

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170 Ford Rd.  
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The doctor speaks Spanish - el doctor habla Espan-ol.

## John Day Taxi

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We offer service now 24/7  
from Friday 6pm to Monday 6am.

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Richie Colbeth, Owner/Operator

## ATTENTION GRANT COUNTY VETERANS:

Did you know a service-connected disabled veteran is entitled to **FREE** use of Oregon State Parks?

See your Grant County Veteran Services Officer today for more information, located at Grant County Courthouse.



**Jeff Wilcox**

Open Mon, Wed, & Fri, 10 am - 4 pm,  
by appointment. Call 541-620-8057

Thank you to everyone that attended and participated in the Butch Goslin dinner/auction. It was a great success and I apologize for the names that weren't included on the Thank You list. So many did so much, and it was greatly appreciated. My initial ad was cancelled and replaced. It is understandable that some donors were missed, since the printed ad was submitted by someone that did not attend the organizational meetings or the dinner/auction. Thank you again to all those that donated, volunteered and attended. We appreciate your help and support. Thanks to you, this event was a great success.

**Walt Kight**

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**MOVIE SCHEDULE JUNE 2-8**

**WONDER WOMAN PG-13**  
Diana, princess of the Amazons and trained warrior, leaves home to fight a war to end all wars.  
FRI & SAT (3:45) 6:45 9:40  
SUN & SAT (3:45) 6:45

**MON & TUES (6:45)**

**WED & THURS (3:45) 6:45 9:40**

**PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES PG-13**  
Captain Jack Sparrow searches for the trident of Poseidon.  
FRI & SAT (4:00) 7:00 9:45  
SUNDAY (4:00) 7:00

**MON & TUES (7:00)**

**WED & THURS (4:00) 7:00 9:45**

**BAYWATCH R**  
Comedy. Devoted lifeguard Mitch Buchanan and a new recruit uncover a local criminal plot that threatens the future of the Bay.  
FRI & SAT (4:10) 7:10 9:50  
SUNDAY (4:10) 7:10

**MON & TUES (7:10)**

**WED & THURS (4:10) 7:10 9:50**

**\$9 Adult, \$7 Senior (60+), Youth**