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# DANGERS OF METH

## An insidious drug that affects entire communities

By Richard Hanners  
Blue Mountain Eagle

**T**he April 28 methamphetamine bust that netted 10 locals in John Day and Mt. Vernon exposed a dark underworld that may have been unknown to many residents in Grant County.

"This community, just like communities all across the country, is reeling from the illegal drug epidemic," Oregon State Police Sgt. Tom Hutchison told the Eagle. "Methamphetamine use is rampant, and the ramifications are felt in just about every call for service that law enforcement officers deal with. Thefts and property crimes, assaults, domestic abuse, child abuse, rapes and other crimes are among some of the byproducts of drug abuse."

The Grant County Sheriff's Office said the investigation is continuing and more arrests are expected, but meth use is more than a crime story. Its impacts can be felt throughout communities.

"Meth destroys all loyalties," Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter told the Eagle. "Meth users will lie to, steal from and hurt anyone, family, friend or foe, to obtain meth to fuel their need. Meth users and dealers will readily turn on anyone, especially those they use with or buy from, to escape the consequences of their actions."

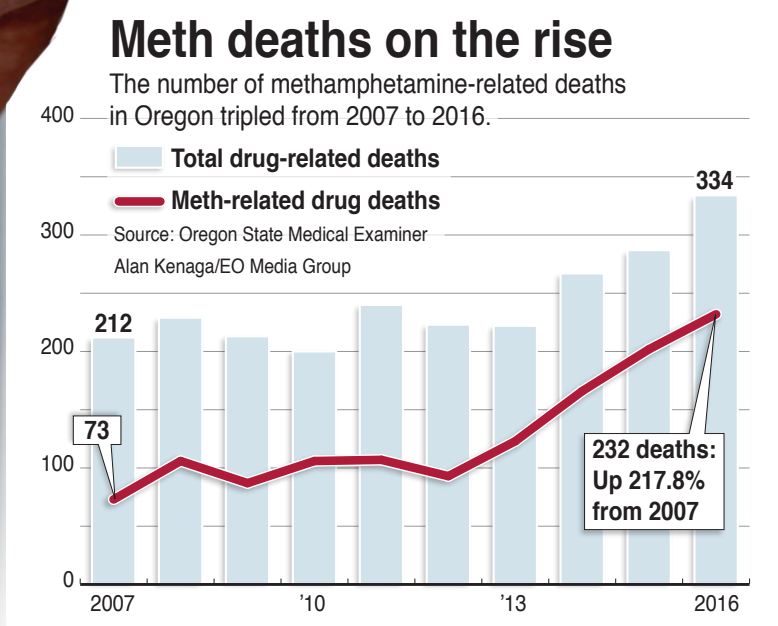
Meth is a synthetic drug that stimulates the nervous system and is sold as pills, powder or small chunks. Common street names for meth include crank, speed and chalk. In its pure form, which is smoked in a pipe, snorted, swallowed or injected, the drug is known as ice, crystal, glass and quartz.

According to the Oregon Health Au-

thority, the toxic properties of meth use include agitation, psychosis, seizures, respiratory arrest and death. Because it is produced in illegal clandestine laboratories, impurities and byproducts are often found in meth that can cause unpredictable effects on users.

"Injury to the liver, kidneys, brain,

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### Insidious drug



Contributed photos

Syringes and methamphetamine in an illegal drug kit confiscated by local police in 2016.



A glass pipe with methamphetamine residue that was seized by local police.



Local police found methamphetamine and glass pipes in a kit sitting on the passenger seat of this vehicle during a traffic stop in 2016.



Baggies containing methamphetamine and two glass pipes used for smoking in a drug kit confiscated by local police during a traffic stop in 2016.

## Ortelco partnering with broadband coalition

### Network to expand south in phases

By Richard Hanners  
Blue Mountain Eagle

A public-private partnership between the Grant County Digital Network Coalition and Oregon Telephone Corporation, and a plan for phased expansion of broadband in-

ternet service south from John Day to Burns, were unveiled by John Day City Manager Nick Green May 8.

After nearly two years of private negotiations with Ortelco, a memorandum of understanding is being drafted to explain the relationship between the coalition, composed of John Day, Grant County and Seneca, and the local internet provider and telephone company, Green told the city council.

"Ortelco is excited to be able to continue to do what we do best, which is to continue to offer service to outlying areas comparable to our existing service areas," Ortelco General Manager DeeDee Kluser told the Eagle. "We look forward to opportunities ahead."

### Phased construction

Green announced the news as the council prepared to vote on a reso-

lution authorizing an application for a U.S. Department of Agriculture Community Connect grant worth up to \$3 million and requiring a 15 percent match.

According to the resolution, the city would use a portion of the \$1.8 million in broadband funding it received from the state last year to pay the \$450,000 match required by the federal grant. The council unanimously approved the resolution.

Green told the council he didn't want to see the entire \$1.8 million in state funding spent in one shot running a cable the 70 miles from the fiber backbone in Burns to John Day. Instead, he wanted to use the state money to leverage additional funding for the network in three phases.

In Phase 1, a fiber backbone would be run from John Day to Seneca, with

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## Kick-starting construction

### Housing incentive program moving forward Pricing gap

By Richard Hanners  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Kick-starting the home construction sector in a rural economy that's seen significant population decline over the past three decades will not be easy, but a housing incentive plan proposed by the city of John Day has the support of the state and local builders, according to City Manager Nick Green.

The city's goal is to see 100 new homes built in the 20-year life of the program. To encourage new home construction as well as remodeling, the city will offer builders or homeowners cash incentives based on the increased assessed value of the property.

About 158 acres of suitable residential land exists in John Day for new home construction, but only five new homes have been built in the city over the past 10 years. In addition, many existing homes were constructed in the post-World War II boom and are in serious need of repair. Green noted it's hard to find homes for sale in John Day that are in the mid-range price of around \$250,000.

What's blocking new home construction or extensive remodeling is a "cost-value disconnect," according to the urban renewal program's draft report. The average price of a

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## County seeks to dismiss Sheriff Palmer's lawsuit

By Sean Hart  
Blue Mountain Eagle

The county is asking a judge to dismiss a lawsuit filed against it by the sheriff seeking legal fees.

Attorney Gerald Warren, on behalf of the county and Grant County Court, filed a motion to dismiss May 2, arguing the lawsuit was legally deficient and that it was submitted too late and incorrectly.

Attorney Benjamin Boyd, on behalf of Sheriff Glenn Palmer, former civil deputy Sally DeFord and the sheriff's office, filed a complaint in court March 16, asking a judge to declare that they are not liable for legal fees from a lawsuit filed by The Oregonian newspaper. The Oregonian sued Palmer, DeFord



Sheriff Glenn Palmer

and the sheriff's office to compel the disclosure of public records in May 2016. The suit was dismissed when the records were disclosed, but a judge awarded The Oregonian \$28,337 in attorney fees. Palmer and DeFord also incurred \$41,355 in fees while represented by a private law firm, Hostetter Law Group, according to their complaint, which claimed the county is legally required cover all of the fees.

Warren argues in the motion to dismiss that Boyd's complaint fails to state the "ultimate facts constituting a claim"

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