

Grant County declares emergency over coronavirus

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County Court declared a local state of emergency March 18 in response to the coronavirus to qualify for state and federal reimbursements for resources used to respond to the global pandemic.

The declaration will give the county flexibility in responding to the public health crisis.

In addition to the declaration, the court formally appointed Deputy Dave Dobler as temporary emergency management coordinator.

Dobler was named incident commander of the county's coronavirus response team on the recommendation of Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer in an emergency court session March 6.

County Judge Scott Myers said the intention is to have Dobler in the position on a temporary basis.

Dobler said he wanted to be clear that he is only stepping into the role because he was asked by the court.

"I'm taking hits in the public like I moved in on this position," Dobler said.

County Commissioner Jim Hamsher said the court's efforts are proactive, and the community

needs to understand that the court, not the sheriff's office, oversees emergency management in the county.

Myers said Dobler will work full time, 40 hours per week, in an emergency management role. Human Resources Manager Laurie Wright said the county plans to pay Dobler out of the emergency management budget at his law enforcement hourly rate. Dobler said he is not leaving law enforcement as he does not want to lose his certifications.

The county also approved \$9,000 for supplies at the emergency operations center for radios, whiteboards and a Go-to-Meeting conference call service among other things.

Dobler said communication is critical and that many conference call services are down.

"The reason for the radios is several-fold," Dobler said. "One is there are some things we want to do with community support, neighborhood watch and law enforcement. We want to make sure we have closed, simple, easy-to-use radios."

Myers asked Dobler, who also serves as the sheriff's search and rescue coordinator, to track all purchased items for emergency management and make sure



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell

Grant County Court's special meeting March 18 was limited to 25, and attendees were not to sit within 3 feet of another during the proceedings.

not to comele resources with search and rescue.

Myers emphasized to the court, public and department heads that emergency management items may be reimbursable on the state end federal level with the county's emergency declaration.

The court moved that any purchases over \$200 would need collective approval.

The court agreed that the courthouse would remain open for now because fewer than 20 people are usually in the building at one time.

Frances Preston said the virus could have been in the county since January.

Myers said, without the ability to test for the virus, it is impossible to know.

"We don't know for sure if it's been here," Myers said. "We don't know if it's here, or still yet to come."

County Commissioner Sam Palmer said, when he was in Washington, D.C., the last week of February, he spoke with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Homeland Security and heads of state, and there was just idle chatter here and there about the coronavirus — nothing that indicated a global pandemic was coming.

Hamsher said he had followed the news, state briefings, and information on the state health authority website.

He said, before the

county's March 6 emergency meeting, he met with businesses and saw a lax approach to the virus from some of them that prompted the emergency meeting for a more proactive approach.

Judge Kathy Stinnett asked the court to hear from the department heads since the front row seats were reserved for them, and they were asked to be at court.

Haley Walker, Grant County Regional Airport manager, said she is concerned about the county's limited work-from-home policy.

The court said the policy is based on guidance from the Oregon Health Authority, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Grant County Public Health Department, with some changes to fit the County's needs.

Walker said she is worried about what a county employee with an essential job function who cannot telecommute will do if there is a reduction in hours from a shutdown.

Hamsher suggested Walker find tasks for employees at the airport. Walker said her employees likely would not be affected, but generally speaking, she wanted to ask the question.

Palmer said the Oregon Department of Employment had addressed those scenar-

ios and that he would disseminate the information through the EOC.

Wright said Klamath County, who provided a template for Grant County, has paid regular wages in the event of a shutdown but allowed employees to use accrued time off if they have it if they have chosen not to work.

Wright said, in Klamath County, those who are sick with the virus use sick leave.

Wright said at the state level, though, anyone who is out sick is required to take two weeks off.

Grant County Health Department Director Kimberly Lindsay, who was in the meeting by phone, said the medical aspects of the county's policy were sound but that the information is ever-changing.

"We are trying to find our way in a dark room right now," Lindsay said.

Louise Laduke, a former Blue Mountain Hospital doctor, stressed the importance of the county staying on top of prevention efforts.

"This can kill millions of Americans," Laduke said.

Laduke contrasted Italy's response with that of South Korea. She said South Korea's cases plateaued because they tested a lot and followed cases.

"Italy did not do that," Laduke said.

Law Enforcement in Grant County making adjustments for COVID-19

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Grant County Sheriff's office announced adjustments are being made due to concerns with COVID-19.

Their patrol service will see little to no change, according to their press release, but they have closed the office to public entry. Call 541-575-1131 to report issues if possible, and patrol staff will have the option to handle some issues over the phone.

Concealed handgun permits and fingerprinting are suspended for now, but Sheriff Glenn Palmer is working with other law enforcement agencies to see if permits can be considered valid until the office is open again.

The Grant County Jail has also suspended all visits and will be adding additional time for telephone use in the mean-

time. Attorney-client visits are also asked to use phone consultations when possible. People were asked to use PayPal to put money on the books for an inmate.

The John Day Police Department is also taking precautions to keep their officers healthy so they can continue service. They are not allowing the public into their office at this time to maintain a sterile environment.

Prior to the rise of COVID-19, a priority for Chief Mike Durr was face-to-face contact from law enforcement when they would receive a complaint, but now they are taking care of non-emergent complaints over the phone. The department will continue with regular patrol and continue their work. Also, all sex offender registrations will be done by phone according to the JDPD. If people are due to register, call the JDPD at 541-575-0030.

Temporary Oregon state park closure starts March 23 and affects camping and day use

Blue Mountain Eagle

At the direction of Gov. Kate Brown, and in keeping with the guidance that all Oregonians should stay home and stay healthy, the Oregon State Park system will close at the end of the day Monday, March 23. Day-use areas will be closed starting March 23 at 5 p.m. Campers need to check out no later than 1 p.m.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department previously ordered a campground closure that would have started April 3, and advised travelers to avoid day trips to full parks. With new guidance from the Governor, and clear signs that travelers are not following advice to avoid full parks, a statewide state park closure is necessary.

Beaches can be closed by OPRD at their discretion and will be closed if social distancing practices are not followed.

All daytime park services will be closed statewide, including parking areas and restrooms. Campers will be refunded for all canceled nights. All travelers are advised to follow the guidance to stay home to stay healthy. City and county parks and other public land managers are open at their discretion, with the recommendation they do so only if they can adhere to social distancing practices.

"We would have preferred an orderly shutdown of the system and to remain open for daytime visits, but our concern for the effects on rural health care systems requires

us to move up and expand our plans," said Lisa Sumption, director of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. "We know this will cause a disruption, since we're suspending service to everyone, even people who live near a park. Reducing contact between people is more important than recreation at the moment."

Know before you go:
Travel Oregon travel alerts: <https://traveloregon.com/travel-alerts/>

State park service reductions and closures: <https://bit.ly/OPRD-covid>

Oregon Department of Forestry: <https://www.oregon.gov/ODF>

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife: <https://myodfw.com/visit-odfw-wildlife-areas>

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 Feb. 26:

Concealed handgun licenses: 12

Average inmates: 18

Bookings: 7

Releases: 9

Arrests: 2

Citations: 0

Fingerprints: 6

Civil papers: 18

Warrants processed: 3

Assistance/Welfare check: 0

Search and Rescue: 0

Justice Court

Violation of the basic rule: Jamie L. James, 36, Vancouver, Washington,

Feb. 16, 75/55 zone, fined \$165; Gregory A. Harestad, 71, Portland, Feb. 19, 79/55 zone, fined \$265; David A. Hartt, 66, Riddle, Sept. 27, 85/55 zone, fined \$265.

Exceeding speed limit: Bryan M. Crow, 32, Junction City, Jan. 13, 56/25 zone, fined \$265; Kenneth A. Kolstad, 71, Big Bend, Feb. 27, 88/65 zone, fined \$440; Lucas D. Palmer, 27, Mt. Vernon, Jan. 31, 58/45 zone, fined \$165.

Exceeding length: Tye L. Taylor, 55, Midvale, Utah, Jan. 15, fined \$115; Matthew J. Barnes, 32, Citrus Heights, California, March 3, fined \$115.

Driver failing to report accident: James R. Miller, 20, John Day, March 9, fined \$220.

Carless driving—accident: James R. Miller, 20, John Day, March 9, fined \$220.

Falsified log entries: Eric D. Valle, 30, Brawley,

California, Nov. 14, fined \$265.

On March 18, the court granted a judgment for Ray Klein Inc., Professional Credit Service, against Joshua Zeigler, Prairie City, for \$615.11.

On March 18, the court granted a judgment for Ray Klein Inc., Professional Credit Service, against Joshua Scott Herburger, Mt. Vernon, for \$635.96.

On March 18, the court granted a judgment for Ray Klein Inc., Professional Credit Service, against Terry L. Whitten, John Day, for \$562.62.

On March 18, the court granted a judgment for Ray Klein Inc., Professional Credit Service, against Erika R. Prophet, Prairie City, for \$690.04.

On March 18, the court granted a judgment for Quick Collect Inc. against Robert Copenhaver for \$300.

On March 20, the court

granted a judgment for Suzette Mael, against Rhonda Jacobs, Prairie City, for \$658.

Oregon State Police

March 16: Arrested a 69-year-old man for violating a "no contact order" issued by Grant County Circuit Court.

March 17: Stopped a vehicle near West Main Street and Northwest Third Avenue in John Day for not having a front license plate. The driver, Devan J. Haynes, 26, was misdemeanor suspended. OSP cited and released the driver for driving while suspended and also issued violation citations for improper display, failure to install ignition interlock device and driving uninsured. The vehicle was not towed.

March 17: Responded to a noninjury, non-blocking vehicle crash on Highway 395C, near milepost 41.5 in Harney County. When OSP arrived, the vehicle was on its wheels in the ditch on

the north bound side of the road. Oregon Department of Transportation arrived on scene and conducted traffic control. The owner of the vehicle didn't want the vehicle towed. The owner said he would remove the vehicle. The vehicle was tagged and left at the scene.

Dispatch

John Day dispatch worked 98 calls during the week of March 16 to March 22, including:

John Day Police Department

March 18: Received a report of a dispute on West Main Street.

March 20: Received a report of theft on West Main Street.

March 20: Dispatched for a report of theft on West Main Street.

March 21: Conducted a traffic stop and cited Blaine Ross of Canyon City for failure to register vehicle.

Oregon State Police

March 16: Responded to a report of calves on Highway 26.

March 20: Dispatched to a report of pigs on Highway 26.

Grant County Sheriff's Office

March 16: Received a report of theft on Highway 395 S.

March 19: Received a report of shots fired on Ridge Road.

John Day ambulance

March 17: Responded to an unresponsive 82-year-old woman on Broken Leg Lane.

March 18: Received a call of a 59-year-old woman complaining of illness on Highway 402.

March 19: Responded for a patient who fell in the bathroom on South Johnson Avenue.

March 20: Responded for an elderly woman with difficulty breathing on Highway 26.

March 22: Responded for a 65-year-old man with difficulty breathing on West Main Street.

Grant SWCD Weed Control Dept.

Working for You in 2020

Thanks to the Grant County Court and Northeast Oregon Forests Resource Advisory Committee, Grant Weed Control is able to offer a **25% Cost share program for Noxious Weed Control on Private Grazing Lands**, through a Title II funded Grant Project. This program will provide a maximum \$5,000 of noxious weed control services with a \$1,250 maximum landowner contribution to qualifying participants. To be eligible for participation, the treatment property must not be actively irrigated and must be primarily managed for livestock grazing, minimum of 20 acres in size, located within Grant County, and must contain priority noxious weed species. Applications for this limited weed control assistance opportunity will be ranked and funded according to a priority noxious weed list.

Contact the Grant Soil and Water Conservation District Office at (541) 575-1554 or visit 721 S. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845 for applications and additional information.

This application deadline for this program is April 10th, 2020.

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

Are you ready for the next step?
Don't forget to apply for a
**Silvies Valley Ranch
Educational Scholarship.**

Open to Grant & Harney County students.
Postmark deadline is
April 1, 2020
Applications are available from your
school's guidance counselor or online at
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