

Road hazard app designed at OSU played a big role during wildfires

A web application created by Oregon State University (OSU) students and staff for the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to alert drivers about real-time road hazards played a significant role with the flow of information during Oregon's historic wildfires in September.

Developed by the OSU College of Engineering's Center for Applied Systems and Software and released in 2019, the TripCheck Local Entry app had mostly been used to alert drivers about road construction, but it also works for other events such as weather hazards, car accidents, and fires.

The app is used by 38 city and county organizations in Oregon to enter events that cause road closures or slowdowns. In response to the recent wildfires, agencies used the app as a quick and easy way to alert the public about roads that were impacted by blazes.

In September, 233 events were added by local agencies — the highest number ever in one month. In comparison, there were 53 events added in September 2019.

The interactions with local events on TripCheck increased from 8,700 in September of last year to 644,000 this year. TripCheck use of local entries began to rise on September 7, dramatically increased the next day, and peaked on September 9 as local agencies gathered information from the fire lines and posted closures.

"Our collaboration with OSU has resulted in new outlets to communicate with the public in innovative ways using established and proven methods," said Brent Atkinson, the business systems manager at ODOT for the TripCheck project and other collaborations with Oregon State. "In the case of the recent wildfires, our efforts reached hundreds of thousands of people who otherwise would have had to go to other websites to obtain information on local road closures."

Other collaborative projects between ODOT and OSU include RealTime signs, <www.tripcheck.com/RealTime>, that gives information on travel time based on current traffic flow, and a system to dispatch emergency road crews that has improved response to calls by five minutes,

Oregon Employment Department expands website accessibility

The Oregon Employment Department last month announced that its unemployment website, <www.unemployment.oregon.gov>, is now available in 15 languages other than English.

The new site, which provides timely information about new unemployment programs, instructions for how to apply for benefits, and answers to frequently asked questions, should be easier to navigate and more accessible to mobile device users.

The website is now available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Farsi, Lao, Simplified Chinese, Khmer, Korean, Hmong, Mien, Marshallese, Chuukese, Arabic, Somali, Russian, and Romanian.

Some functionalities and external pages, including the Online Claim System, online Pandemic Unemployment



WILDFIRE WARNINGS. A web application created by Oregon State University students and staff for the Oregon Department of Transportation to alert drivers about real-time road hazards played a significant role with the flow of information during Oregon's historic wildfires in September. Pictured are a damaged guardrail (top photo) on Oregon Highway 22 near Gates and a closed road at Exit 19 in Ashland (bottom photo). (Photos courtesy of the Oregon Office of Emergency Management)

according to ODOT.

"The numerous projects with ODOT have given hundreds of undergraduates hands-on experiences over the last 14 years," said Mark Clements, senior development and quality assurance manager for OSU's Center for Applied Systems and Software.

Phi Luu started working on projects for ODOT as a second-year student in computer science. Over the last year and a half, he contributed to software assisting ODOT operators in handling road and weather events.

"Working on ODOT projects gave me a glimpse of how large-scale software was developed and maintained," Luu said. "My experience was wonderful. Not only did I receive incredible mentorship and guidance to develop my software engineering skills, but I was able to apply my knowledge to solve real-world problems."

Assistance (PUA) form, Contact Us form, and chatbot, are currently only available in a limited number of languages. The department is working to make the online PUA form, currently available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, and Korean, available in all 16 languages. The PUA form is expected to soon be available in Simplified Chinese and Arabic.

Translated application forms for regular unemployment insurance, PUA, and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) are also available on the "Filing a Claim" pages.

Claimants who need additional claim assistance in languages other than English should send their name, requested language, and phone number to <OED_LanguageAccess@oregon.gov>.

PPB reminds drivers to avoid distracted driving, help save lives

Distracted driving is one of the fastest growing safety issues on U.S. roads today. Distracted drivers aren't just a threat to themselves, they're a danger to everyone else on the road, according to the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) and other traffic safety officials.

National distracted driving efforts held last month focused on ways to change the behavior of drivers through legislation, enforcement, public awareness, and education in an effort to help save lives.

While participating in the safety effort, the PPB Traffic Division reminded drivers of five important statistics:

- 1) Texting while driving is equivalent to driving after consuming four beers.
- 2) Texting while driving increases by 23 times, the chances of being involved in a crash.
- 3) Texting while driving results in a delay of an additional 5 seconds to react to an incident occurring in front of you.
- 4) Texting while driving gives drivers

the reactionary skills of a 70-year-old adult.

5) Texting while driving is the cause of 25% of all crashes.

In addition, they pointed out that the first-time violation for Operating a Motor Vehicle while using a Mobile Communication Device costs up to \$270.00 in Multnomah County. A driver receiving a second citation for the same violation results in a fine of up to \$445.00. If caught a third time, the distracted driver has committed a Class B Misdemeanor with a minimum fine of \$2,000 that could be imposed.

Traffic safety officials ask all drivers to do their part by learning from the statistics and helping educate others about the dangers of distracted driving. "Stay ALIVE ... Don't Text and Drive!!!"

To learn more about driving safely and distracted driving laws, visit <www.oregon.gov/odot/safety/pages/distracted.aspx>.

Department of Consumer & Business Services



Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace

Open enrollment runs from November 1 to December 15

It's the only time of year most people can buy their own health insurance. If you don't get health insurance through your job or the Oregon Health Plan, you may qualify for coverage at OregonHealthCare.gov.

You might also get help paying for your insurance.

Find out what coverage and savings are available to you at OregonHealthCare.gov

Visit OregonHealthCare.gov/gethelp or call

1-855-268-3767 to find FREE local help from an expert.

We provide free interpretation services in any language.

Act soon! The deadline is December 15.

OregonHealthCare.gov

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