

Hospital admin explains coming health care changes for county

By David Sykes
Dan Grigg, Morrow County Health District Administrator, explained the coming changes under the Patient Protection & Affordable Care Act,

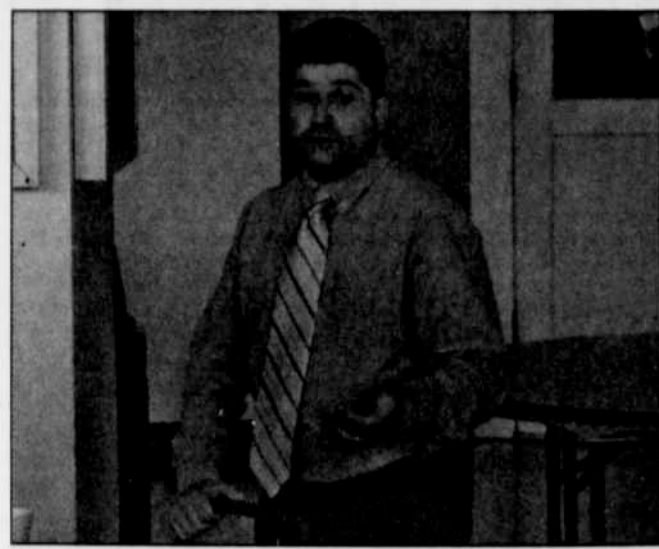
or "Obamacare," to the Heppner Chamber of Commerce last week.

Grigg said provisions already implemented in the law included having young adults stay on parent's insurance until age 26, no lifetime dollar limits from insurance companies, people with Medicare get free preventive services, and no more pre-existing condition for kids under the age of 19.

Griggs said what is coming next is no more pre-existing conditions for anyone, and that most Americans will be required to have minimum insurance. In a deal struck between Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber and the Federal Government, Oregon will start health insurance exchanges beginning Oct. 1, 2013.

Also coming, says Grigg, is the expansion of Medicaid eligibility to incomes of 133% of the federal poverty level. Currently there are 2,434 Morrow County residents eligible for Medicaid with an additional 1,000 anticipated by the year 2016.

Also by 2015, says Grigg, is the requirement



Morrow County Health District Administrator Dan Grigg explains the new health care law to the Heppner Chamber of Commerce last week. -Photo by David Sykes

that employers with 50 or more full time (30 hours per week) employees provide them with health insurance or pay a steep penalty. Businesses with fewer than 25 employees may purchase insurance and would be eligible for tax credits.

With some exceptions, in 2014 there will be penalties for anyone who does not buy health insurance, or have it provided at work, of \$95 per adult and \$47.50 per child (up to \$285 for a family). In 2015 the penalty goes to \$325 per adult and \$162.50 per child (up to

\$975 for a family). In 2016 the penalty goes to \$695 per adult and \$347.50 per child (up to \$2085 for a family). Undocumented immigrants, people opposed on religious grounds, Indian tribes, and low income families will be exempt. Also those on Medicare, Medicaid, veterans plans, employer plans and certain self-purchased health plans are also exempt from the penalties. The IRS will be in charge of enforcing the new Obamacare law and penalties.
-See COMING HEALTH-CARE CHANGES/PAGE FIVE

HEPPNER

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Gazette Times

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Watch out, this baby's in a rush

Second baby born at Pioneer Memorial since obstetrics discontinued in 80s

By April Sykes

Pioneer Memorial Hospital does not do births anymore and hasn't for some time. However, little Walker McCoy Haak apparently did not get that memo.

He was born on Thursday, Sept. 12, at 3:41 p.m. at Pioneer Memorial to Amy and Aaron Haak of Heppner, weighing in at 7 lbs. and measuring 21 inches long.

The last baby born at PMH was an emergency birth on Thanksgiving Day, 2010; the last scheduled birth was in the mid-1980s.

Walker's mom and dad had planned to deliver at Kennewick General Hospital; however, things progressed a little faster



Aaron, Amy and Walker Haak. -Photo by April Sykes

than anticipated. Amy, whose due date was Sept. 29, had planned on being induced on Sept. 25.

Amy, who operates Blondie's Salon in downtown Heppner, went to work that morning as

usual. "I colored one head," said Amy, "but I was not feeling well and decided to go home. I couldn't get a hold of Aaron, so I called

-See BABY AT PMH/PAGE SIX

First mosquitoes with West Nile detected in county

West Nile virus, a mild flu-like disease spread by mosquitoes, has been reported to have been found in one testing site in Morrow County, Oregon Public Health officials announced Monday. One site was found in rural Irrigon.

Health officials are advising people in Morrow County to take precautions

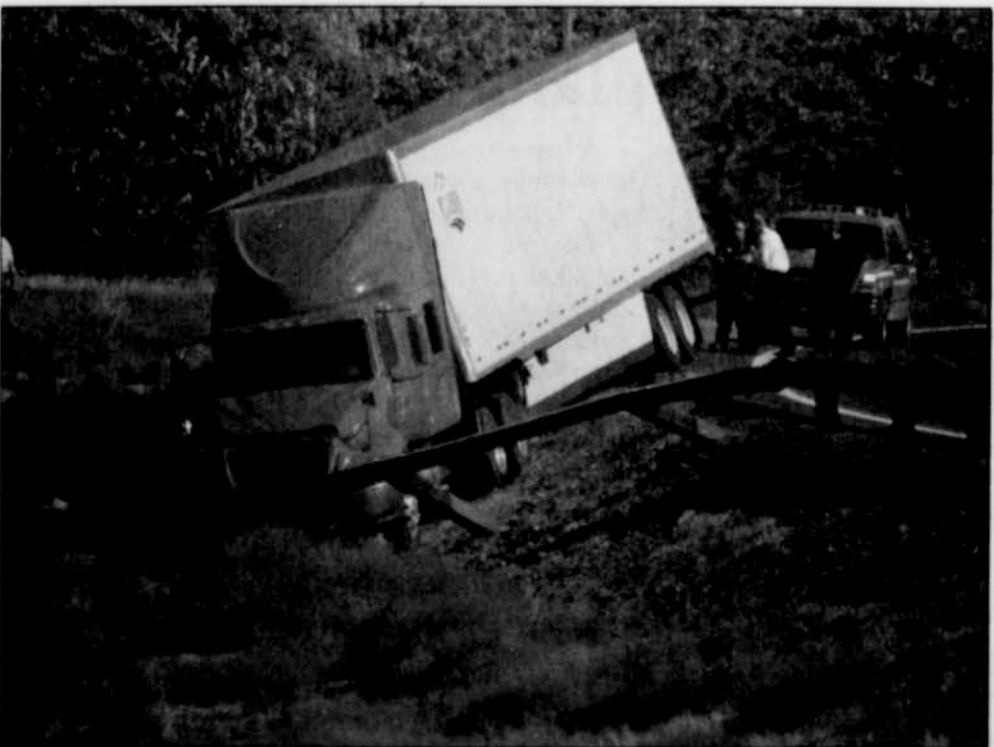
against mosquitoes in order to avoid the risk of infection. People in that area are warned to be especially careful to avoid getting mosquito bites.

"The risk of contracting West Nile virus may be low, but we do encourage people to take appropriate precautions to protect themselves against

mosquito bites," said Greg Barron, Manager of North Morrow Vector Control District. "We will continue to increase our mosquito control operations utilizing our Ultra Low Volume (ULV) truck-mounted sprayers to reduce adult mosquito populations."

-See WEST NILE IN MORROW/PAGE FIVE

Oops!



This 18-wheeler somehow slipped off the road in Boardman Monday, causing some consternation for emergency crews surveying the accident. The truck ran off the road on Marine Drive some time during the morning. -Photo by David Sykes

Downed power lines caused blackout, road closures

The powerful windstorm that gusted through Morrow County Sunday evening also whipped through the Butter Creek Valley and into the Hermiston area. Gusting winds from 50 to 70 mph flattened trees and power poles and knocked out power from Boardman to Despain Gulch.

According to Brian Kollman at Columbia Basin Electric Co-Op, the power lines did not belong to Columbia Basin. Rather, it was Umatilla Electric Co-op in Hermiston that began receiving emergency calls around 5:30 Sunday evening. A dozen

transmission poles and 16 distribution poles were reported down on the Butter Creek Highway several miles south of the freeway, the co-op said in a news release. More poles had fallen on Lindsay Canyon Road near the Bombing Range, on Saylor Road on Butter Creek, at Baxter and Edwards roads near Hermiston, on Old River Road near Umatilla and multiple other locations. Numerous downed wires were reported at Irrigon.

An estimated one mile of transmission lines and one mile of distribution lines had blown down in the storm at various locations.

"We have a whole bunch of poles on the ground," a UEC lineman reported. "We're looking at working all night long to put it back together."

Fallen trees were reported throughout the region, as well as many trees leaning into power lines, tripping protective breakers at substations throughout the area. A protective breaker also opened at the McNary substation at Umatilla, the gateway for some of UEC's wholesale power supply.

By 9 p.m. Sunday, thousands of customers -See STORM DAMAGES POWER LINES/PAGE SIX

Sweek to remain on CREZ board

By David Sykes

Retired Morrow County Assessor Greg Sweek will remain on the Columbia River Enterprise Zone (CREZ) board of directors at least to the end of this year, the board learned at its last meeting Monday in Boardman.

Sweek has served as one of two county representatives on the six-member board since its inception, and there was some question if he had to resign since he no longer is either an elected official or employee of the county. However, the Morrow County Court recently revised its rules so former county employees can serve on the board, thus allowing Sweek to stay on.

"I would like to stay involved in CREZ," said Sweek, who has many years experience with enterprise zones, having previously been responsible for applying for and setting up

a since-expired enterprise zone in South Morrow County some years ago.

The CREZ board is responsible in negotiating fees in lieu of taxes agreements with companies wishing to locate in the current enterprise zone at the Port of Morrow, and then deciding where those collected funds will be spent. So far the zone has been successful in attracting businesses and the board will be responsible for collecting and spending millions of dollars in fees over the coming years. The board is made up of two people from the county, two from the Port of Morrow and two from the city of Boardman.

In other business the board discussed \$11,250 recently received from Morrow County. Before CREZ had set up its own

fiscal agent, which is now the city of Boardman, funds collected from businesses were sent to Morrow County. Last fiscal year the county collected

approximately \$42,000 from businesses locating at the enterprise zone, and the CREZ board was waiting to see how much of that money would be transferred to them. An ongoing

discussion has been held on how much the CREZ needs to reimburse the county for use of employee Carla McLane as Enterprise Zone Manager. McLane's main job is county planner and the exact amount of time she has spent working for the CREZ has so far not been completely documented.

Some board members wished to ask the county for a detailed explanation of -See CREZ BOARD/PAGE SIX



Greg Sweek

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