

Crews halt first major fire of the season in Morrow County

By Andrea Di Salvo

A fire that started near Boardman Monday was finally contained Tuesday morning, according to local officials.

According to the Morrow County Sheriff's Office, all local agencies responded to the fire, which was first reported by Three-mile Canyon Farms, Boardman, around 2 p.m. Monday. It originated at a haystack. Some are speculating that the fire was caused by lightning but officials say the exact cause of the fire is unknown.

MCSO reported that the fire was mostly contained on the nature conservancy (Boardman Grasslands), but the flames also burned along the south side of the coal-fired plant in Boardman and across the U.S. Naval Bombing Range

to Bombing Range Road. MCSO Sgt. Sarah Smith said the blaze hit Bombing Range Road at 5:47 p.m. Monday and jumped the road.

"We did have a fire line holding it, so it didn't get very far," Smith added.

High winds quickly drove the fire eastward; firefighters worked well into the night fighting flare-ups and back-burning to keep the blaze contained. Smith said it flared up again Tuesday morning, but the fire was contained and all units clear as of Tuesday afternoon.

No structures were apparently threatened, and no injuries were reported in connection with the blaze, which burned primarily through fields and grassland. No acreage estimate is available at this time.

Father arrested for death of 10-month-old daughter

Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson has announced that the Morrow County Sheriff's Office arrested Travis Michael Martin, 21, of Irrigon in connection with the death of his 10-month-old daughter, Savannah Martin.



Travis Michael Martin

The investigation began after Savannah was found to be unresponsive in a vehicle in Pendleton last Thursday, May 28, 2015. The child's mother, KaSandra Martin, took her daughter to St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton.

Based upon the nature of the injuries, the child was transported by Life Flight to Sacred Hearts hospital in Spokane, WA; she was pronounced deceased later that afternoon. After a review of the injuries on the child, Spokane Police Department initiated an investigation.

Investigators determined KaSandra Martin played no role in her daughter's mistreatment or death.

However, after an intensive investigation involving the Hermiston Police Department, Morrow County Sheriff's Office, Pendleton Police Department, Spokane Police Department, and the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office, Martin was arrested on charges of first-degree manslaughter, first-degree assault, and two counts of Assault in the third degree, all Measure 11 offenses.

(Ballot Measure 11, which passed in November 1994, applies mandatory minimum prison sentences to certain crimes against persons with no possibility for any reduction in sentence, such as for good behavior.)

Martin was also charged with three counts of criminal mistreatment in the first degree.

The investigation is ongoing. Please contact the Morrow County Sheriff's Office with any information involving this case.

Celebrate Heppner June 12

Celebrate Heppner Day will be back Friday, June 12. The event will include the annual local merchant sidewalk sales and special sales and events going on inside some businesses, including a mini carnival for kids and a prize wheel for adults at Community Bank.

The Bank of Eastern Oregon will once again be sponsoring a customer appreciation community hamburger/hot dog barbecue meal from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the area between the BEO Heppner branch and their administrative offices.

The annual farmer's market will be kicking off its season at the Heppner City Park from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. A full schedule of events will be out soon.

Bartholomew building blends old with the new

By David Sykes

A walk through the new Morrow County administration annex under construction next to the existing Courthouse in Heppner, recently named the Bartholomew Building, reveals a beehive of activity as workmen busy themselves installing sheetrock, insulation and other finishing work in preparation for the planned October completion date.

Construction Superintendent Pat Post of general contractor WC Construction, gave a short one-man tour to the press Monday, pointing out each of the rooms and areas of the new facility. From office and conference rooms to public and common areas, the building is shaping up to be a first-class facility. Also, the style of the building is blending the older courthouse building with the new facility.

Stacks of sheetrock were recently spotted being brought in. When asked how much sheetrock it takes to do the 10,000-plus-square-foot Bartholomew Building, named after a county judge in office during the Heppner 1903 flood, Post just says, "A lot."

"We will be starting on the landscaping soon," says Morrow County Judge Terry Tallman, who also says the building is on schedule with no major hang-ups so far. Tallman said the contractors on the project are going to get the Future Farmers of America club at Heppner High School involved with the project, saying instructor Beth Dickenson will be able to use the landscaping as a "real world classroom teaching moment." He said Westwinds Nursery out of Hermiston will also be working on the project.

May's warm trend expected to continue into June

According to preliminary data received by NOAA's National Weather Service in Pendleton, temperatures at Heppner averaged warmer than normal during the month of May, a trend that is expected to continue into the month of June.

The average temperature was 59.5 degrees, which was 3.3 degrees above normal. High temperatures averaged 71.8 degrees, which was 3.1 degrees above normal. The highest was 90 degrees on the 30th. Low temperatures

averaged 47.2 degrees, which was 3.6 degrees above normal. The lowest was 38 degrees, on the May 5.

Precipitation totaled 1.37 inches during May, which was 0.29 inches below normal. Measurable precipitation of at least .01 inch was received on nine days with the heaviest, 0.63 inches, reported on the 13th.

Precipitation this year has reached 4.37 inches, which is 2.91 inches below normal. Since October, the water-year precipitation at Heppner has been 8.41

inches, which is 2.93 inches below normal.

The highest wind gust for May was 46 mph, which occurred on the 31st.

The outlook for June from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center calls for above-normal temperatures and near-normal precipitation. Normal highs for Heppner rise from 73 degrees at the start of June to 81 degrees at the end of June. Normal lows rise from 47 degrees to 51 degrees. The 30-year normal precipitation is 1.38 inches.



Workmen have been busy inside the new Bartholomew Building adding sheetrock, electrical, plumbing and other infrastructure in preparation for the scheduled October completion date. Studs are all metal in this facility, explains construction superintendent Pat Post. —Photo by David Sykes

In other developments Tallman says that, as part of the project, the county will be redoing Gilmore Street behind the courthouse. That work will be done during fair and rodeo week. He says he anticipates minimal interruption of locals and

trical, plumbing, HVAC and other infrastructure have been done and workers have moved on to the finishing work of putting up walls, ceilings and flooring. Post estimates there have been 10 to 35 workers on the job at any given time

worked on the buildings.

"It's a big project," he says.

Post's headquarters is a trailer out in front of the job site, where he says every Monday there is a safety meeting. He also says all contractors working on the job come to the trailer first and check in. The tables inside are stacked with blueprints and paperwork necessary to do a project this size.

Tallman also meets with the contractors every Tuesday to go over progress and anticipate any problems that might come up.

Post says the local people have been curious about the new building, but overall he says everyone has been very cooperative.

"A lot of people are curious about that," Post says, referring to the distinctive tower-type construct above the main entrance.

"We call it the bird house," he says with a grin.



Columns along the side are just one of the ways the new building is "blended" into the older existing courthouse. —Photo by David Sykes

traffic, however.

Back inside the building, Post points out that most of the framing, elec-

and, when all is done, 15 to 20 different contractors, from roofers to electricians to flooring, will have

Second annual Ruckus in the Boonies planned for August

After a smashing success in its first year, Ruckus in the Boonies Music Festival 2015 is now in the planning stages for the beginning of August.

"We had a successful festival last year and are planning on making it bigger and better in 2015," says Aaron "Dogbite" Harris, the heart and soul behind the festival's creation.

This year's festival will take place Saturday, Aug. 1, from 1 p.m. to 1 a.m. behind Bucknum's Tavern in Heppner. The event will feature two stages and more than 20 touring bands.

Several of the artist on the docket are high-profile names. Headlining the Ruckus this year will be Roger Alan Wade.

Wade has written songs for Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, George Jones,

Willie Nelson, Hank Williams Jr., Karen O. and a host of others. Several of Wade's songs have appeared in Hollywood hit movies, as well as on MTV's Wildboyz, Nitro Circus, and Ridiculousness.

Wade's "Country State of Mind," recorded by Hank Williams Jr., was a number-one single and garnered Wade three gold records and one platinum. Wade also has appeared on "The

Jimmy Kimmel Show" and "Howard Stern Show."

Wade's albums "Stoned Traveler," "Deguello Motel," "Southbound Train" and the legendary "All Likkered Up" continue to receive rave reviews and remain fixtures on alternative country charts.

"By bringing Mr. Wade, I believe the festival will bring a lot more people from out of town," Harris says, adding that he has

heard the motel and the Willow Creek RV Park, located by the Willow Creek Reservoir, are almost completely booked for both that Friday and Saturday.

The event is geared toward all ages, though there will be a 21-and-older pre-show July 31 inside Bucknum's Tavern. During the main event, a barricade will separate minors from

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