

# Local fire departments get practice with Jaws of Life



The three local fire departments of Heppner, Lexington and Ione got some training and practice last week using the rescue tool Jaws of Life. The tool is used to cut away parts of vehicles for quicker rescue of crash victims. The firemen first cut the stanchions and then completely remove the top of a practice car. Not only do the firemen get practice but they also are recertified on using the tool, says Fire Chief Steve Rhea. In addition to training on a car with the tool the firemen also receive two 2-hour classes on its use. Martin Towing of Lexington provided three vehicles for the firemen to practice on. History of the jaws tool goes back to 1961 when George Hurst invented the Hurst Rescue Tool after he viewed a stock car race accident in which it took workers over an hour to remove an injured driver from his car. The tool was a great improvement over saws and crow bars also used in rescue. -Photo by David Sykes.

# Governor Kate Brown extends face coverings requirement statewide

Face covering requirements apply to indoor public spaces, take effect on Wednesday, July 1

Governor Kate Brown announced that Oregonians statewide will be required to wear face coverings in indoor public spaces, beginning Wednesday, July 1. The guidance applies to businesses and members of the public visiting indoor public spaces. Face covering requirements were already mandated in eight counties.

"From the beginning of the reopening process, I have said that reopening comes with the risk of seeing an increase in COVID-19 cases beyond our health systems' capacity to test, trace and isolate them," said Governor Kate Brown. "Over the last month, we have seen the disease spread at an alarming rate in both urban and rural counties. The upcoming July 4th holiday weekend is a critical point for Oregon in this pandemic, and we can all make a difference."

"Modeling from the Oregon Health Authority shows that if we don't take further action to reduce the spread of the disease, our hospitals could be overwhelmed by new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations within weeks."

"The choices every single one of us make in the coming days matter. Face coverings that cover your nose and mouth play a critical role in reducing the spread of this disease because droplets from our breath can carry the virus to others without us realizing it. If we all wear face coverings, practice six feet of physical distancing in public, wash our hands regularly, and stay home when we are sick, then we can avoid the worst-case scenarios that are now playing out in other states."

"I do not want to have to close down businesses again like other states are now doing. If you want your local shops and restaurants to stay open, then wear a face covering when out in public."

"Please keep your Fourth of July celebrations small and local. We saw a lot of new COVID-19 cases following the Memorial Day holiday. Another spike in cases after the upcoming holiday weekend could put Oregon in a dangerous

position." "Oregonians have all made incredible sacrifices over the last several months that have saved thousands of lives. The actions we take now can protect our friends, neighbors, loved ones, and fellow Oregonians from this disease, and prevent the need for another statewide shutdown. We are truly all in this together."

Following is what Dr. Paul Cieslak, an infectious disease specialist with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), said on a phone conference June 5 between the Association of Oregon Counties and the OHA about the effectiveness of masks.

"The argument for masks is largely made on theoretical grounds. We know the virus lives in the nose and throat and is carried in respiratory droplets so it's reasonable to assume that if you put something on that will prevent the expulsion and dispersion of respiratory droplets you might be able to prevent a certain number of people from being exposed to it. We know that some people carry the virus without having symptoms and people who carry the virus carry the disease for a day or two before they get symptoms so that would be the rationale for putting masks on people who have no symptoms to prevent the dispersion of droplets. It's a theoretical thing; there isn't a lot of good data showing that if everybody wears a mask, we will reduce the incidents of disease. You know you will hear people argue they wore them in Singapore and Singapore controlled COVID-19. Which is not a great argument because there were a lot of other things Singapore was doing along with the masks."

"It's basically theoretical on what can stop the disbursement of droplets. I would tend to caution people not to put too much confidence in the mask." A significant amount of virus can be spread by touching, by hand to hand contact. People touching their faces where there is virus then they shake hands and the virus gets passed.

"Theoretical reasons for masks, and CDC (Center of Disease Control)

is requiring it and this is causing a certain amount of confusion. WHO (World Health Organization) does not require it; they looked at the data and said there is not a lot of empirical evidence as to the effectiveness. CDC looks at the theoretical data and says well maybe they could work so we are following CDC recommendation.

Kate Brown's press release states that Oregon Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) will take the lead, along with other state and local agencies, in enforcing face covering requirements for all covered Oregon businesses.

According to Morrow County District Attorney, Justin Nelson, "The Morrow County philosophy has been to educate people when a violation occurs, and if it continues to occur then it will be forwarded to the State agencies- OSH, OSHA, etc., and they can do enforcement if they so choose. As the Morrow County District Attorney, I have not received any requests or citations for prosecution of individuals violating a Governor order."

Sheriff Matlack told the Gazette he will not enforce the use of masks in public. In an article published in the Heppner Gazette-Times in May regarding businesses being forced to close, Sheriff Matlack stated his plan for enforcement was to "warn and educate."

Editor's Note: The quote from the May 13 issue regarding closing businesses by Sheriff Matlack said, "If some businesses are not following directives as suggested or ordered by the Governor's Office, the Sheriff's Office may contact, remind or educate businesses etc., but our role is not to arrest or cite businesses." Early on in this process, it was determined that if enforcement action was necessary, the best plan was to have the licensing agencies that regulate the businesses be the ones responsible for dealing with the owners/managers of the businesses. The licensing agency would determine if their business license would be subject to suspension or other enforcement type action would be necessary.

# Health District concerned about decrease in clinic visits

The Morrow County Health District Board expressed concern over the decrease in visits at Pioneer Memorial Clinic in Heppner at their Monday night meeting in Irrigon. Chief Financial Officer Nichole Mahoney estimated that the Heppner clinic is down around 20 percent over the last 10 years, while the Irrigon Clinic is around 30 percent up over the same period.

"I know doctor visits are down," said board member Leann Rea, "but is there any way to calculate how much is due to COVID?" Mahoney said at one point that the Heppner Clinic revenues were as much as 40 percent down.

Rea suggested that some people may have been afraid to come to the clinic or felt they were discouraged from making appointments because of the COVID scare. Mahoney also pointed out that "a lot of provider turnover" may have contributed to the downturn.

In light of that information, the board opted to postpone plans for the Heppner Clinic rebuild and Pioneer Memorial Hospital renovation and review the project again in the 20-21 budget year. The board also put off a presentation of the proposed construction by the architect until later, considering the \$12 thousand payment required to the firm.

The board communicated via Zoom with George Dunkel, consulting administrator at the Special Districts Association of Oregon, concerning the district's search for a new administrator. Current CEO Bob Houser had previously announced his retirement. Dunkel said that his organization is ready to begin the search as early as tomorrow (Wednesday, July 1) with the position open for six weeks. Dunkel said that his agency plans a meeting with the board to present a report on the quantity and quality of applicants. He said the first step was to advertise the opening on the MCHD website.

The position will pay \$155,000 to \$195,000 per year, commensurate with experience, plus medical, dental and vision insurance with additional insurance policies, sick leave, paid holidays and benefits.

In other business, the board approved changes in the 2020-21 budget as follows:

Total resources - \$18,535,756; Hospital -\$9,138,197; Home Health & Hospice -\$680,578; Boardman Ambulance -\$533,585; Irrigon Ambulance -\$328,425; Ione ambulance -\$7,475; Heppner Clinic -\$1,693,057; Irrigon Clinic -\$1,988,063; Ione Clinic -\$267,422; Other Revenue-\$301,027; Dona-

tions & Grants-\$353,000; Interest income-\$56,000; Community Service Fees-\$173,100; Electronic Health Record Reimbursements-\$8,500; 340B Retail Pharmacy Net Revenue-\$281,811; Operating, Capital, Long & Short Term Loans-\$500,000; Total Resources Except Taxes-\$16,310,240; Property Taxes (including Local Option Levy if applicable)-\$2,225,516.

Total expenditures -Hospital-\$10,469,115; Home Health & Hospice-\$962,192; Boardman Ambulance-\$438,803; Irrigon Ambulance-\$363,505; Ione Ambulance & Lexington EMS-\$20,871; Heppner Clinic-\$1,878,326; Irrigon Clinic-\$1,633,277; Ione Community Clinic-\$216,620; Community Benefit Grants-\$50,000; Revenue Deductions & Bad Debt-\$1,065,123; Capital Purchases-\$1,152,922; Capital Lease Principal Reduction-\$45,014; Long & Short Term Debt Principal Reduction-\$361,702; Total Expenditures-\$18,657,470; Net Increase/Decrease in Cash (\$121,714); Grant Funds already on hand for projects in this budget that offset the decrease in cash-\$308,826.

Capital purchases include: a replacement ambulance for \$150,000 paid by a grant; Stryker Load System for Ambulance-\$23,000-grant; PowerPro XT Gurney for ambulance-\$17,300-grant; Xray Machine replacement-\$100,000 with grants/board designated on hand; Xray digital reader system-\$55,000-grant; Retaining Wall at Heppner Clinic parking area-\$16,732-cash on hand; Expansion Tank for Boiler Room-\$9,141-cash on hand; Lab Microscope-\$6,601-cash on hand; Dishwasher-\$16,322-cash on hand; Irrigon Ambulance Hall Construction-\$258,826-grants received prior year; Heppner Clinic Building/Hospital Modernization/Architect/Planning Fees-\$500,000-interim loan; total capital purchases-\$1,152,922.

The board adopted the budget, made appropriations of \$18,657,470 and imposed taxes of \$.6050 per \$1,000 assessed value for operations and \$.3900 per \$1,000 assessed value for local option tax for operations.

Houser reported that Nurse Practitioner Betty Hamill's last day at MCHD was May 29. She did not renew her employment with MCHD so that she could move to the Portland area to be closer to family. Since the district is not recruiting for that position, Danielle Mateleska, Physician's Assistant, has moved into that office which frees up her office for Dr. Betsy Anderson, who has signed a year contract with the district,

and others. Physician's Assistant Amanda Fabian will go to the Ione Community Clinic on Tuesdays and split time with PA Mateleska at the Boardman Health Department.

Mahoney released the following profit and loss statement for the month: Gross patient revenue-\$1,028,782; provision for bad debts-\$7,794; contractual and other deductions-\$136,528; tax revenue-\$181,603; other operating revenue-\$210,746; total operating revenue-\$1,549,864; total operating expenses-\$1,255,295; non-operating gain-\$47,477; for a \$342,047 gain for the month, and an average monthly year-to-date gain of \$48,979.

Data for May include the following:

-Pioneer Memorial Hospital had seven acute admissions, eight admissions for observation, one swing bed admission, 498 total out-patients, 58 emergency room encounters, 1,580 lab tests, 97 x-ray/ultrasound tests, 40 CT scans, one MRI scan, 24 EKG tests, five lower endoscopy procedures and 37 respiratory therapy procedures.

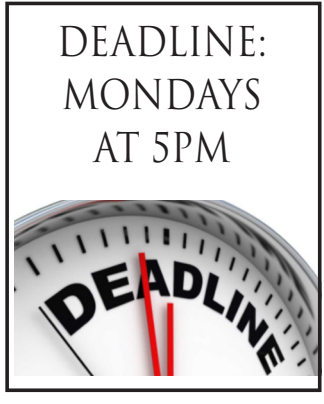
-Pioneer Memorial Clinic had 316 patient visits, one new patient, 18 seen by a nurse and six no-shows; Irrigon Clinic had 301 patient visits, 29 new patients, 94 seen by a nurse and 32 no-shows; and Ione Clinic had 53 patient visits, one new patient, 10 seen by a nurse and zero no-shows.

-Home Health had 179 visits in May; Hospice had one admission; Pharmacy had 3,026 drug doses for \$115,478.

-Heppner Ambulance had 24 page-outs with 15 transports for \$21,838 in revenue; Boardman Ambulance had 35 page-outs with 18 transports for \$33,540 in revenue; Irrigon Ambulance had 38 page-outs with 17 transports for \$25,929 in revenue; Ione Ambulance had two page-outs with no transports; there were six life flights.

At the meeting, Rea announced her resignation from the board as she is moving out of the district. The board also held an executive session involving submission of confidential information for board review.

The next meeting will be held July 27 at the Ione Community Church.



Heppner Lions Club Fireworks Stand Opening July 1st 1-5pm Heppner Market Fresh Parking Lot