



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY HERMISTON FIRE &amp; EMERGENCY SERVICES

Hermiston hazmat crews respond to an overturned garbage truck outside of Heppner last week.

## Hermiston hazmat team responds to Heppner crash

By JENNIFER COLTON  
Staff Writer

Last Wednesday afternoon, a garbage truck started over a wooden bridge on Rhea Creek, about 12 miles south of Heppner. The truck broke through the bridge, overturning and landing in the creek.

Fuel began to seep into the water from the truck's engine while the driver struggled to find a way to call 9-1-1 — the phone line to the private property had been severed during the collapse.

The emergency call came from a rural mail carrier who came into contact with the driver, according to Rusty Estes, Heppner fire chief.

"The rural carrier picked him up and took him to the next house," Estes said Friday. "Heppner Rescue responded, the sheriff's office, and of course Heppner ambulance. When the Hermiston hazmat team came in,

we were really glad to see them."

Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services handles all hazardous material calls for northeast Oregon. The district is bordered to the south by district 14, based in Ontario, and to the west by District 3, based in Gresham.

The garbage truck incident happened at 1:45 p.m.; hazmat was dispatched at 2:52 p.m., and the eight-man team arrived on scene before 5 p.m.

The Hermiston responders continued the containment work started by Heppner teams, including adding additional booms — long connections that float above and below the waterline to keep oil and debris contained — and removing oil from the water.

"From what we could tell, most of the oil was coming out of the engine compartment, so that was a only a small amount," Davis said.

Oil and hydraulic fluid were removed from the truck as well, and the driver was transported to a local hospital.

In addition to the Heppner, Morrow County and Hermiston emergency response teams, an environmental company from the Tri-Cities was dispatched to respond, as well as two tow trucks to pull the vehicle from the water.

The Hermiston crew dedicated more than eight hours to the incident, according to battalion chief Jim Davis.

"As far as a dump truck going off a bridge, that's pretty uncommon," Davis said with a laugh. "As far as the hazmat cleaning up oil and diesel spills, that's pretty common. That's probably the most common thing we do."

Public in the area was advised to watch for oil and plan on using a secondary water source while fluids dissipated.

## Modulars coming to keep up with enrollment boom

### Parking and traffic changes implemented

By JENNIFER COLTON  
Staff Writer

The Hermiston School District will add six temporary classrooms at Hermiston High School next month.

The classrooms will provide a stop-gap solution to the district's rapid enrollment growth.

Although the district planned for more students, January enrollment almost doubled those predictions: The district forecast an increase of 112 students from January 2015 to January 2016, but actual enrollment came in at 212 more stu-

dents over that time period.

Of district schools, Hermiston High School has the most students. The school's current enrollment stands at 1,471; however, the senior class of 2016 has 289 students, and next year's freshman class is expected to be about 375. Those extra 100 students could put the high school over its 1,600 student capacity — which does not include participants in the online and alternative school programs, who may use high school facilities.

Facing that crunch, the Hermiston School Board discussed the rental of three modular buildings that could each house two classrooms. Funded from the district's general fund, the rental was expected to cost about \$150,000 in its first year and

\$60,000 for any additional years. In the coming weeks, the three modular buildings will be erected between the HHS parking lot and the Weber Field parking lot. The classrooms will remove 21 parking spaces.

"The district is experiencing record student growth, and modular facilities are necessary to accommodate the added students," said Mike Kay, district executive director of operations. "We realize the impact the buildings will have on parking and appreciate the patience and flexibility of our students, staff and community."

The location of the classrooms had been used as a bus route. Traffic patterns within the parking lots will be rerouted for student safety.

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