

# Big fines for driving distracted

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
STAFF WRITER

Answering a text message while driving could cost you a pretty penny after Oregon's new distracted driving law takes effect on Oct. 1.

The more important thing, Oregon State Police emphasize, is it could cost you your life.

That's why starting in October, using a handheld electronic device while driving will cost you \$260 to \$1,000 for your first offense, \$435 to \$2,000 for your second and up to 6 months in jail for your third.

"I think the message is very clear that the state takes distracted driving seriously," OSP Sgt. Michael Berland said.

Previous distracted driving laws in Oregon only covered texting and

talking on the phone. Since those laws were put in place, however, drivers have come up with an increasingly long list of reasons to take their eyes off the road. They send photos of the scenery via Snapchat, search Google for nearby restaurants, scroll through a playlist for their favorite song, send work emails or post updates to Facebook.

The legislature took a comprehensive approach this year by passing a bill banning all use of mobile electronic devices while driving. Just holding a phone in your hand while driving is a violation, even if you're not actively using it when an officer spots you. You can use it if you're legally parked on the side of the road, but not while stopped at a red light or stuck in a traffic jam.

More than 3,100 people die every year in cell phone-related crashes, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Under the law that takes effect Oct. 1, a first-time offender who did not cause a crash would face a Class B violation, with a presumptive fine of \$260 but a maximum fine of \$1,000. Those first-time offenders could have their fine suspended if they complete a course of safety classes within four months, but the violation will stay on their record.

Second-time offenders face a Class A traffic violation, carrying a presumptive fine of \$435 but a maximum of \$2,000. Any additional violations become a Class B misdemeanor, resulting in a criminal record for the perpetrator and up to a \$2,500 fine and 6 months in jail.

## ST. PETER'S

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tours will be available by Berry, secretary of the Fort Henrietta Foundation, with assistance from Kiwanis volunteers.

Also, a volunteer work party is Saturday at 8 a.m. Duffy invites the public to grab a pair of gloves and show up to help.

"Here we are 20 years later ... what will become of it?" Duffy pondered. "We intend to give a nudge for serious fundraising. We want to see this go forward."

Berry said preservation

and restoration should be important to everyone. For Echo, she said, the old St. Peter's church is an icon and an important symbol in telling the story of Echo's unique Azorean Portuguese, the early sheep industry and the significance men like Joseph Cunha and his contributions to the region's history.

"We as a community feel that our history and our heritage represented by our historic buildings and sites is what makes us special and unique," Berry said.

Now, for the old St. Peter's church it comes down to focusing on the project



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

and financing the work that needs to be done.

"It's a treasure, you can't replace it," Duffy said.

For more information, contact Duffy at 541-303-5730, echokiwani@centurytel.net or Joe Ramos at 509-366-3980.

### BY THE WAY

## BTW

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ter in Hermiston. In all, 32 units were collected, said volunteer **Patti Perkins**. The **Hermiston Eastern Star Club** provided the canteen. The next blood drive at Good Shepherd is Monday, Oct. 16 from noon to 6 p.m. Perkins said walk-ins are welcome, but it's helpful if donors schedule an appointment. To schedule an appointment, call 800-448-3543. A ser-

vice group is needed for canteen duties for the December drive. For details, call Perkins at 541-571-5372.

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Have you noticed that the windows at **Balls Hermiston Plaza** are covered up with plywood? That is due to damage caused by some vandals several weeks ago. Store manager **Leanne Turrietta** said about three weeks ago, she got a phone call around 11 p.m. from Hermiston Police, saying someone had shot out the

window of the store with BB guns. Turrietta said the store's security cameras did not catch the vandal. She said the windows were damaged, but were not shattered.

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You can submit items for our weekly *By The Way* column by emailing your tips to [editor@hermistonherald.com](mailto:editor@hermistonherald.com) or share them on social media using the hashtag #HHBTW. Follow the *Hermiston Herald* on Twitter at @HermistonHerald.

## SKATE PARK

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stretch.

One of the city's community enhancement goals was making the area along the railroad tracks more visually appealing. The agreement between Mitco and the city also requires Mitco to landscape the parcel that will contain the Maxwell Marketplace, and requires an 8-foot right of way through the property to be maintained for a future extension of Hermiston's trail system. The \$220,000 will come

from the community enhancement reserve fund, Hermiston Urban Renewal Agency and transient room tax.

Myers said Hermiston's origins as two separate cities on either side of the railroad tracks created a gap through the middle of town, but in recent years he has worked to close that gap. Myers owns Nookie's Restaurant and Hermiston Brewing Company next to the tracks, sold land to build the Holiday Inn Express and recently opened the Maxwell Siding Event Center. The Maxwell Marketplace

will be the latest project that Myers said will help tie both sides of downtown together and bring more people and business to the downtown district.

"I think the future is bright for downtown," he said.

Work on the parking portion of the project will begin this fall, with a groundbreaking for the pavilion in the spring and a goal for completion by June 1.

Contact Jade McDowell at [jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4536.

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