STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

The eastbound lanes of the Interstate 82 bridge at Umatilla won't open in 2018 as expected.

Bridge not yet ready to reopen

By JADE MCDOWELL
STAFF WRITER

The Washington State Department of Transportation doesn't know exactly when the eastbound Interstate 82 bridge across the Columbia River will reopen, but it won't be in 2018.

The department had previously said construction on the bridge deck near Umatilla would finish in October, then pushed that timeline to December. But in an email to the *Hermiston Herald,* spokeswoman Jackie Ramirez said the bridge that previously took drivers into Oregon will continue to be closed through the winter because crews cannot finish work on the bridge until the weather warms up again.

"Crews will finish pouring the concrete once the weather gets better and completion of the bridge will be in spring/summer of 2019," she said.

Ramirez said there was some "additional repair work" that cropped up unexpectedly as contractors worked on replacing the bridge deck, and that extra work put them too far behind to finish up concrete overlay pours before cold weather set in.

A smaller crew will continue throughout the winter on repairs that can be completed in cold weather.

The eastbound bridge, built in 1955, had originally carried traffic to and from Oregon before a second westbound bridge was added in 1988 to carry two lanes of traffic into Washington while the 1955 bridge carried two lanes of traffic into Oregon.

Since the summer of 2017 the westbound bridge has carried one lane of traffic each direction while construction crews rebuild the eastbound bridge deck, which had been riddled with holes and patches over time.

Oregon and Washington split the cost of maintenance for bridges that span the Columbia River between the two states. In this case, Washington is managing the project, originally budgeted at $10 million.

Ramirez said WSDOT wanted to remind drivers to be cautious and allow themselves extra time to cross the bridge, as the department has seen traffic delays during peak travel times, such as Thanksgiving weekend.

"We especially see the bridge back up when there is a collision, as crews have to block both lanes to clear the collision," she said.

Umatilla County Sheriff's Office forms sharpshooter program

New sharpshooter unit would provide an additional resource during local crises

By PHIL WRIGHT
STAFF WRITER

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office is developing a team of sharpshooters.

Sheriff Terry Rowan said the "designated marksman program" is new but aims to fill a crucial need for crack shot officers who can respond to local crises.

The Oregon State Sheriff's Association pushed the initiative this year, Rowan explained, for sheriffs to develop teams with sharpshooting skills.

"There has been a little bit bigger push to create these regional specialized teams," Rowan said.

Beyond having interests in such a program, he said, the key was for agencies that could equip and train officers. Rowan, who serves on the association's executive committee, said Umatilla County could handle it.

The team consists of four members: Capt. Stewart Harp, Lt. Thoren Hearn, detective Erik Palmer and retired court security officer Cliff Pease, who also has a military background. The sheriff's office has not made a public splash about the program. But last week, Hearn approached the county board of commissioners for approval to purchase 16,000 rounds of ammunition for $8,021.50. He said the bulk purchase would provide ammo for training, on-duty deputies and the designated marksman program.

Harp said the sheriff's office has been mum on the marksman team because it remains in development. Rowan said the unit is too new to send out, so the first call for a tactical police response would go to the Pendleton Police Department SWAT team and the next to Oregon State Police SWAT.

But both teams take time to assemble and get in place, particularly the state team, whose members live throughout Oregon. Harp said the standoff with a homicide suspect in January 2017 at a Pendleton hotel exemplifies the need for a local approach.

Police from Pendleton, Hermiston and the sheriff's office waited long hours for the Oregon State Police SWAT to provide crucial support. He said that incident sparked discussion in the sheriff's office about the glaring need for a faster response with officers who have the proper training and equipment.

"Sometimes the only way to address that is to step up and do it," he said. "I had the opportunity to step in and develop the program."

Rowan said the team members earlier this year took 48 hours of "pretty extensive" shooting training over several days and they train every month. Their main weapons are .308 rifles. Almost half of the cost of the ammunition was for 4,000 .308 Winchester rounds.

Rowan said the team is not a fiscal burden for the sheriff's office. The ammo purchase was in the budget. And he said the sheriff's office gives guns it confiscates to reputable arms dealers after criminal cases conclude. In exchange, he said, the dealers give a discount on the cost of new equipment. Simply put, the sheriff's office is using weapons from bad guys to help arm and outfit its own.

The program could one day expand, he also said, but at this time it was difficult to say what the end result would look like. Still, he and Harp were positive about the team's potential.

"I'm really excited," Harp said, "about what it will bring to our community."

Better rating for fire district likely to lower insurance premiums

By JADE MCDOWELL
STAFF WRITER

Commercial and residential insurance premiums will likely go down in the Hermiston and Stanfield area after Umatilla County Fire District's Insurance Services Office rating improved.

Both cities, as well as most of the rural area UCFD covers, have been upgraded to a class three. Previously, Hermiston was a class four and Stanfield was a class five.

The ISO gives fire districts ratings on a scale of 1 to 10 based on factors, such as a fire district's response times, station proximity, equipment quality, training hours, water infrastructure and dispatch call-handling times. Dick Ferranti of Ferranti Graybeal Insurance Agency in Hermiston said the lower the number, the less risky insurance companies consider an area.

"A lower number indicates a quicker response, better equipment, better vehicles, etc. so that if we do have a fire they can put it out more quickly," he said.

He said the ISO class is one of several things insurance companies look at while setting premiums, but the lowered number is a "very positive thing" for the Hermiston-Stanfield area. The ISO is an independent actuarial financed by dues from insurance companies, and those companies use data gathered by the ISO — including the fire district ratings — when calculating premiums for homeowners and business insurance. The new class three rating should reflect in lower premiums as people renew or purchase policies.

"The lower the rates, the lower the protection class, the more attractive this area becomes," he said.

In an announcement about the lowered ISO rating Thursday, the fire district said the new class three rating puts UCFD in the top 8 percent of the nation.

"The ISO change here is huge for the communities and those areas within five miles of a fire station," Chief Scott Stanton said in a statement. "It really shows a lot of the hard work that the water departments, county 911 dispatch and the fire district have put into this accomplishment."

He credited the 2016 merger between Stanfield and Hermiston fire districts with making the improvements that led to the ratings change possible.

Further class changes could be in UCFD's future. Operations chief Jim Forquer said there are still areas the district could improve upon, particularly when it comes to prevention items, such as building inspections.

"A lower number indicates a quicker response, better equipment, better vehicles, etc. so that if we do have a fire they can put it out more quickly."

Dick Ferranti, Ferranti Graybeal Insurance Agency

Forquer said the UCFD administration and board are also looking at how they could add a fifth fire station to UCFD's properties. Right now, he said, it's just in the talking stage, but they are looking for property or an existing building on the east side of Hermiston, somewhere toward Highway 37 and Walls Road. Being able to put personnel and equipment out there would put almost all of the fire district within 5 miles of a station.

Forquer said there are many factors that help UCFD achieve a good ISO rating. The merger strengthened their staffing, training and equipment scores and they have strong working relationships with neighboring fire districts. He said the district is helped by having five water tenders, which benefits rural areas where fire hydrants aren't plentiful.

"We have a fairly robust water tender support system, so we can have a lot of water on the road," he said.

Backyard By Design, LLC
Give the Gift of Outdoor Space For the Holidays!
Holiday Special!
15% Off Solar Shades!
Offer Expires: 12/31/18
FREE ESTIMATES!
541-720-0772
102 E Columbia Dr.
Kennewick, WA 99336
Call for showroom hours
Pergolas · Patio Covers
Patio & Solar Shades
Solar Screens · Screen Rooms · Retractable Awnings & More!
License #188965
www.mybackyardbydesignor.com

eomediagroup
The most valuable and respected source of local news, advertising and information for our communities.
eomediagroup.com

WILDHORSE RESORT & CASINO
5 Theater Cineplex
Check wildhorseresort.com for showtimes
$5 Matinee Classics Every Wednesday
Credit & Debit Cards accepted
Cineplex gift cards available
541-966-1850
Pendleton, OR I-84 - Exit 216

McKay Creek Estates
FREE Cognitive Screening
Is Mom a little more forgetful lately?
There are many early warning signs of a potential memory disorder, such as Alzheimer's disease. That's why we're offering a FREE and CONFIDENTIAL cognitive screening. We encourage anyone who is concerned about cognitive decline to take this short, in-person screening. The screening is administered by a qualified health care professional.
To schedule your cognitive screening today, please call (541) 704-7146.
McKay Creek Estates
1601 Southgate Pl.
Pendleton, OR 97801
Prestige Senior Living, L.L.C.
www.PrestigeCare.com

Your Family Deserves The BEST Technology... Value... TV!...
dish
Upgrade to the Hopper® 3 Smart HD DVR
• Watch and record 16 shows at once
• Get built-in Netflix and YouTube
• Watch TV on your mobile devices
Hopper upgrade fee $5/mo.
$59.99/MONTH for 24 months
190 Channels
Add High Speed Internet $14.95/mo.
Subject to availability. Restrictions apply. Internet not provided by DISH and will be billed separately.
CALL TODAY Save 20%! 1-866-373-9175
Offer ends 11/14/18. Savings with 2 year price guarantee with AT120 starting at $59.99 compared to everyday price. All offers require credit qualification, 2 year commitment with early termination fee and eAutoPay. Prices include Hopper Duo for qualifying customers. Hopper, Hopper w/ Sling or Hopper 3 $5/mo. more. Upfront fees may apply based on credit qualification. Fees apply for additional TVs: Hopper $15/mo., Joey $5/mo., Super Joey $10/mo. All new customers are subject to a one-time, nonrefundable processing fee.

Order Your Favorite Holiday Smoked Turkey!
Place Your Order By Dec. 11th!
Great for gifts, parties & gift baskets.
Gift certificates available
QUANTITIES LIMITED, ORDER YOURS NOW!
E.O.M.S.
Eastern Oregon Mobile Slaughter
541-567-2011
253 W. Hermiston Avenue, Hermiston