



Walla Walla Union-Bulletin Photo/Greg Lehman

East Umatilla Fire and Rescue crews work to extricate the driver of an overturned semitruck on Highway 11 on Sunday. Officials said high winds caused the trailer to flip. Southbound lanes were closed at Steen Road due to the crash.

Wind tips over truck, knocks out power across the county

By JESSICA POLLARD
STAFF WRITER

High-speed winds caused by a cold front in Eastern Oregon and Washington on Sunday wreaked havoc on the Pacific Northwest until early evening, but come Monday afternoon the air had stilled to some extent.

“For the most part, we’re under high pressure now, which calms things down a little bit and warms things up slightly,” said National Weather Service assistant forecaster Ann Adams on Monday afternoon.

Downed lines in the western part of Umatilla County resulted in a loss of power for more than 800 people, who rely on Hermiston Energy Services for electricity. By 7:30 p.m., however, power had been restored to all but 14 Hermiston members.

At 1 p.m., Umatilla Electric Cooperative stated that due to down power lines and falling trees entangling in phone wires, 300 in the Irrigon area had lost their power. East of Hermiston, 230 members in the Columbia and Foster districts were without power. Groups of customers in Mission, Weston Mountain and around Butter Creek awaited restoration from the cooperative.

In total, 630 cooperative members lost their power. But according to the cooperative’s online outage map, all customers could turn their lights back on by Monday afternoon.

“The majority of members had their power on in the early evening, but the crews worked throughout the night to get the power back on,” said Steve Meyers of Umatilla Electric Cooperative.

“There were multiple scattered outages.”

The Walla Walla Union-Bulletin reported that strong winds flipped a Sherwin-Williams semitruck around noon on Sunday. The truck was southbound on Highway 11 south of Blue Mountain Station Road when it blew onto its side into the northbound lane before heading



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Crews work to set a new utility pole near Interstate 84 in Mission on Monday afternoon after high winds toppled the pole and damaged at least three others in the area. According to Pacific Power, the fallen poles cut power to a couple hundred customers around noon on Sunday afternoon and remained out until crews were able to reroute power through other lines around 8:45 p.m. on Sunday.

into a nearby field, pinning the driver.

East Umatilla Fire and Rescue responded to the scene, and the driver was taken by ambulance to Providence St. Mary Medical Center and was later picked up by a Sherwin-Williams manager.

Wind blowing at a speed of at least 74 miles per hour marks the start of a low-level hurricane, and that wind speed was reported Sunday in the city of Helix.

In Pendleton, the National Weather Service station recorded a high speed of 64 mph, and in Hermiston wind blew in the 50 mile-per-hour range.

Dust kicked up by the high speeds lowered visibility on Highway 395 near Umatilla and the Tri-Cities and across other roads in Umatilla County, and a multi-vehicle wreck on Interstate 82 near the Tri-Cities was the result.

Highway 11 between Milton-Freewater and Pendleton, and Highway 204 between Weston and Elgin remained closed for two hours after 1:45 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, according to the Oregon Department of Transportation, due to low visibility and crashes caused by the wind.

And on Interstate 84 near Meacham, downed power lines shut down the interstate between Pendle-

ton and La Grande for two hours after 12:45 p.m. The fallen lines also resulted in outages for many Pacific Power customers.

The downed lines near Wildhorse Resort & Casino caused the largest of 24 power outages that happened Sunday, according to Pacific Power spokesman Tom Gaunt. About 400 Pacific Power customers across the county lost their power for almost nine hours in total.

Gaunt added that one of the power lines strung across the freeway near Meacham will need to be restored, and will result in a brief road closure at that time, although the company is not certain when that will be.

Affected customers in the area are currently hooked up to different lines.

“The work continues,” he said.

The National Weather Service warned Monday that while the high-speed winds from last weekend’s cold front aren’t anticipated to continue into the week, another weather system moving in at the latter end of the week will bring more cool temperatures.

“Not from a cold front like this weekend’s,” Adams said. “At this time, there is no mention of high winds. It remains to be seen.”

Gov. Brown releases funding proposal for E. Oregon floods

HERMISTON HERALD

Gov. Kate Brown announced a funding proposal of \$11.65 million Friday to assist the Eastern Oregon communities devastated by floods earlier this month.

“I saw and heard on my visit last week how devastating this is for residents, and I am determined that it shouldn’t be catastrophic to the stability of the community,” Brown said in a press release. “I am committed to making sure that residents have what they need to stay in place, reopen their businesses, and rebuild their lives.”

The funding package includes relief for businesses and homeowners, along with assistance for levee repairs. According to the release, the state expects the federal government to give “significant funding” through its disaster relief programs and for the state’s \$11.65 million to go “toward filling the gaps of immediate needs that are ineligible for federal reimbursement.”

The proposal lists \$4 million for the “expedited purchase and installation of manufactured homes,” \$1 million in “rapid rehousing funds” for immediate needs, along with \$500,000 for low- or no-interest loans for damage costs not covered by flood insurance.

“In an area already in short supply of available housing, having so many homes wiped out has an enormous impact,” Brown said in the release. “People have been getting by the best they can by staying with friends and neighbors or by driving farther away to find a safe, dry home — but that’s not practical in the long term.”

To address long-term needs, the proposal includes \$2 million in development



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Gov. Kate Brown talks with Harley and Robin Hauck, managers of the Riverview Mobile Home Estates in Pendleton, on Feb 14, 2020. After speaking with the Haucks outside, Brown toured their flood-damaged home.

FUNDING JEOPARDIZED BY WALK-OUT

Senate Republicans walked out on the 2020 legislative session on Monday and House Republicans joined them on Tuesday, aiming to prevent passage of House Bill 1530, known as the cap and trade bill. The bill’s goal is to reduce carbon emissions in the state, but its opponents say it will disproportionately hurt rural residents. Gov. Kate Brown told reporters Monday that the walk-out could jeopardize a variety of endeavors yet to be voted on, including proposed funding for flood relief. The session by law must end on March 8. The legislature won’t have a quorum needed to pass bills until Republicans return, and as of Tuesday afternoon it was unclear when, or even if, they would return.

funds that will become available “upon finalization of a sustainable community plan.”

For businesses impacted by the floods, the proposal lists \$1.5 million for immediate relief in hopes of helping them reopen.

The city of Pendleton, which has estimated costs up to \$4.8 million for damages sustained from the floods, would receive \$1.8 million for “crucial” repairs to its levee system.

Milton-Freewater would also receive \$850,000 for its own recovery efforts.

According to the press release, the proposal has bipartisan support and has been lauded by local legislators.

“I very much appreciate

Governor Brown’s generous and expedient response to the needs of the Northeastern Oregon counties, especially Umatilla County and the places that were hit the hardest,” said Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove. “Not only for recognizing the critical situation that these counties are in, but for going the extra mile and gathering together emergency funds.”

Rep. Greg Smith, R-Hepner, was also appreciative of the package and the governor’s attention to smaller communities, such as Milton-Freewater.

“Governor Brown exhibited strong leadership and compassion in her quick response to the citizens of Umatilla County,” Smith said.

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PET OF THE WEEK

Teddy is a sweet little boy who loves to be around people but has separation anxiety, so he needs to be in a home where someone can be with him or take him to work. He does great with dogs, but does chase cats. Can climb, so needs a secure fenced yard.

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