

Return from remote work provides energy-saving opportunities

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

As businesses reopen, extend their hours or bring workers back to the office for the first time since the pandemic began, Energy Trust of Oregon is reminding them it is a good opportunity to examine their energy usage.

“Smaller changes that wouldn’t be noticeable to employees working in the space or customers can make a big difference,” said Susan Jowaiszas, marketing lead for Energy Trust of Oregon.

She said businesses can think about how they’re using their buildings, and pull back on heating or cooling areas that aren’t being used, for example.

That practice has been a focus for Blue Mountain Community College.

Dwayne Williams, facilities director for BMCC, said his department has asked all staff to provide a schedule of when they will be in their offices or classrooms so that they can plan heating, cooling and lighting accordingly. If no one is going to be in a certain room or section of the building, the temperature will be allowed



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File

Blue Mountain Community College sits nestled in the hills above Pendleton. The college is trying to save energy by scheduling heating and cooling rooms by when staff actually will be present.

to drop or climb, depending on the season.

“We’re doing out best to try and conserve as much energy as we can while still keeping everyone comfortable,” he said.

The HVAC systems across BMCC’s campuses can be controlled remotely from Pendleton, as can much of the lighting, which is also attached to motion sensors.

The college is part of Energy Trust of Oregon’s

Strategic Energy Management program, which provides a free year-long training and cash incentives for businesses and other organizations looking to save money on energy. Williams said BMCC has saved thousands of dollars through simple management practices, and been able to funnel that money back into things like new equipment for groundskeeping staff.

In 2019 they had a contest

between buildings owned by the college. The building that saw the most energy savings over the course of a month got \$1,000 for staff in that building to use on something that would help them save energy, such as lap blankets. Williams said that small activity provided a good reminder for people to get in the habit of thinking about their energy consumption.

“People would walk by and turn the lights off if no

one was in the room,” he said. “We did actually see some pretty good savings.”

In addition to being strategic about heating, cooling and lighting schedules, Energy Trust of Oregon recommends businesses think about the air they’re using. Jowaiszas said with the focus on airflow in preventing the spread of COVID-19, many businesses are following recommendations to pull in 100% of the air coming through the HVAC system from outdoors instead of recirculating the same air inside the building.

While that is a good practice to help protect people from airborne viruses, she said, pulling hot air in from outside takes more energy to heat, so businesses keeping their HVAC system on to some extent in their off hours could consider recirculating air during times no one is in the building.

Keeping blinds closed when hot sunlight is pouring in during the summer and opening them to let sunshine in during the winter can also help, she said. So can keeping thermostats at a more moderate level, sealing up cracks with caulk and using weatherstripping under doors.

If a business is opening up their building after a long period of employees working from home, she said, they should be especially careful to check that filters, heat pumps, vents and other parts of their HVAC systems are clean.

“It’s not uncommon to find birds’ nests, raccoon leavings, beehives, and things like that inside, which can hinder airflow,” she said.

When it comes to equipment, starting up large items on a staggered timetable instead of all at once can help prevent a surge to the system. Jowaiszas recommends people also do their research on energy ratings and available incentives when purchasing new appliances or other equipment for their business.

“When people are looking at purchasing equipment, they need to look at not just what the equipment costs upfront but also what it will cost to run over time,” she said.

The cheapest energy is the energy we as a society never have to produce, she said, so Energy Trust of Oregon is here to help people save as much power as they want to.

Record-breaking heat wave predicted for Hermiston

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Hermiston-area residents should brace themselves for a record-breaking June heat wave next week, as temperatures are forecast to stay in triple digits for more than a week.

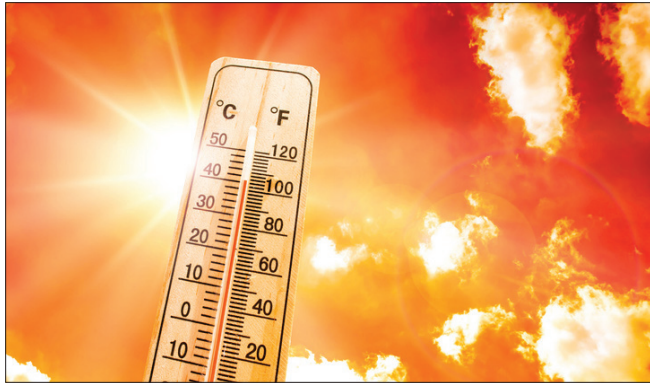
Friday, June 25, is expected to see highs of 101 degrees in Hermiston, peaking at about 113 degrees on Monday, June 28, before eventually dipping back down below 100 degrees on Sunday, July 4.

According to the National Weather Service, the highest temperature ever recorded in Hermiston was 113 degrees, in 1961. The highest June temperature previously recorded was 111 degrees.

Air conditioning units can struggle to keep up during the heat, as can electric utilities, so Energy Trust Of Oregon recommends people do what they can to reduce the strain.

Their tips include:

- Unplug devices that suck up electricity and generate heat when they’re not in use, and avoid using appliances like dishwashers or ovens as much as possible.
- Turn off lights when not in use and swap out traditional light bulbs for LED ones that use less energy and generate less heat.
- Close your blinds and curtains when the sun is shining into that side of your home.
- Open your windows in the evening and morning when it is cooler outside, and use a fan to move



Getty Images

cool air inside.

- Seal up cracks around windows, doors and other openings that are letting cool air escape.
- Check your filters on your HVAC system or window unit and clean them if they’re dirty. Also look for nests and other things that may be blocking airflow.
- Turn your thermostat up a few degrees when you’re not home so your air conditioning isn’t working so hard to cool an empty house.

Health experts are also warning that heat waves can be dangerous to humans and animals.

According to the Mayo Clinic, a person is experiencing heatstroke and needs immediate medical attention when their body temperature reaches 104 degrees. Signs can include altered mental status, such as confusion or dizziness, nausea or vomiting, rapid heartbeat, rapid breathing and flushed skin that is hot and dry to the touch.

If someone is experiencing heat stroke, call 911 and in the meantime work to cool them down by what-

ever means possible, including bringing them indoors, removing clothing, dousing them with cool water, putting ice under their armpits or covering them with a wet towel.

The Mayo Clinic recommends that in excessive temperatures, people keep themselves cool in the following ways:

- Avoid strenuous activities, or exercise during cooler hours.
- Stay hydrated with plenty water.
- Avoid alcohol, which can interfere with your body’s ability to regulate temperature.
- Dress for the heat with loose-fitting, lightweight clothing.
- Protect against sunburn by applying sunscreen generously every two hours outdoors and wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses.
- Never leave anyone in a parked car, even for a few minutes in the shade. Also lock vehicles and other places where children might crawl inside and get overheated.

Reporter Bryce Dole contributed to this story.

Local pools up and running after struggle to find lifeguards

By BEN LONERGAN
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston Recreation Supervisor Brandon Artz says he is finally feeling like he has enough lifeguards to operate the pool after telling the *Hermiston Herald* just more than a month ago that he had about half of the 100 staff necessary to open the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center.

“It was a real struggle, but we’ve had some good kids get trained and apply and come through,” he said Monday, June 21. “I think we’re pretty much set for the rest of the season.”

Artz said he usually starts recruiting lifeguards in January so they can get trained and hired before summer starts.

“We were kind of running down to the wire,” he

said.

Artz said about 86% of the pool’s staff is new this year compared to roughly 40% new staff members in a traditional year.

“We have a lot of people to train and not very much time to do it,” he said.

Key in trying to fill those spots was reaching out to potential employees through social media and offering incentives to returning staff to bring on their friends or others, said Artz.

Among those incentives were items such as sweatshirts or other apparel to help encourage returning staff to find new hires.

“It’s kind of a sigh of relief right now,” he said. “We have the staff we need, let’s get this season rolling.”

Despite some Oregon

pools needing to close down this month due to a chlorine shortage, Artz said the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center has the supply to keep going.

The Pendleton Family Aquatic Center is also up and running, despite a struggle finding life guards.

Jeff Hamilton, a recreation supervisor with the city of Pendleton, said lifeguard certifications last two years, meaning many of the guards he certified in 2019 would need to be recertified this year due to last year’s closure.

Hamilton said the facility usually starts the season with about 40 lifeguards, a number that has dropped to 34 this year.

“I’m kind of close to what I want, but if we’re fully ramped up I could probably use a few more,” Hamilton said.

Hole in Highway 207 delays traffic

HERMISTON HERALD

Traffic on Highway 207 northeast of Hermiston is undergoing some disruption due to a hole in the road.

According to Oregon Department of Transportation Region 5 spokesperson Tom Strandberg, a section

of asphalt caved in where a culvert under the road rotted away.

The stretch of road shortly before Highway 207 joins Highway 730 was closed Sunday morning, June 20. As of June 21, commercial truck traffic has been directed to take an alternate route, while

local traffic is being routed through a single lane of traffic using an automatic flagging system to signal which direction traffic is flowing.

Strandberg said he didn’t know yet exactly when the road will reopen fully, but the lane closure was “hopefully just for this week.”

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