



UPDATES

Minimum wage goes up July 1

HERMISTON HERALD

Minimum wage will rise again in Oregon starting July 1.

Oregon has a three-tier minimum wage, depending on geography. In Umatilla County, Morrow County and other small rural counties, minimum wage will rise from \$11.50 an hour to \$12 an hour. The “standard” minimum wage will rise from \$12 to \$12.75, and the Portland metro area will rise from \$13.25 to \$14 an hour.

While the federal minimum wage has remained at \$7.25 an hour since 2009, Oregon continues to raise its minimum wage above the federal rate. As part of a law that took effect in 2016, the minimum wage in rural counties will rise again to \$12.50 on July 1, 2022.

Starting in 2023, the standard minimum wage will be adjusted each year to match any increases to the U.S. City Average Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers. The Portland area minimum wage will be adjusted to \$1.25 above whatever the standard minimum wage is, and the minimum wage for rural counties will be \$1 below the standard.

The District of Columbia currently has the highest minimum wage in the country at \$15 an hour, while California is at \$14 an hour and Washington state is at \$13.69, according to minimumwage.com.

Oregon is one of only a handful of states in the country that requires restaurants and other businesses where tipping is standard to pay employees minimum wage in addition to any tips they receive, rather than paying below minimum wage and using tips to supplement pay.

HEAT WAVE



Damian Villarreal, 9, runs through a fountain Monday, June 28, 2021, at the Butte Spray Park in Hermiston.

Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald



Kids play at the Butte Spray Park in Hermiston Monday, June 28, 2021, as Hermiston's temperatures climbed to triple digits amid a record-breaking heat wave.

Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Hermiston sets new all-time temperature records

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

This week has been one for the record books.

Hermiston had its hottest day ever recorded Monday, June 28, at 115 degrees, according to the National Weather Service, and was on track Tuesday afternoon to reach 117 degrees as forecast by the Weather Service.

The city's previous all-time record was 113 degrees, set in 1961. Its previous record for June was 111 degrees.

When Al Davis, manager of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, realized Monday night how hot it was going to be the next day, he made a last-minute decision to open up EOTEC's air-conditioned event center to anyone who needed a cool place to land.

“I thought, I have the space and I'm gonna air condition it regardless, so why not?” he said.

As of noon Tuesday, June 29, there were tables, chairs and jugs of ice water set up, but no people yet. Davis said it was possible word hadn't spread, or people were waiting until it got even hotter, or they might be having transportation problems.

He said he planned to stay open until at least 8 p.m. that day, and planned to offer shelter for people through the end of the week. If anyone doesn't have transportation to or from EOTEC this week, they can call Hermiston Taxi at 541-567-6055 and the city of Hermiston will pay for the ride.

People who need a free place to cool off in air conditioning also are welcome at the Hermiston Public Library.

Keeping cool indoors

Meanwhile, community Facebook pages, such as What's Happening Hermiston?, were full of people asking if anyone knew of someone who could repair their broken air conditioning or loan

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EO Media Group, File
Gov. Kate Brown, pictured in this 2018 file photo, announced that most restrictions around COVID-19 will lift Wednesday, June 30, 2021.

Pandemic restrictions will be lifted statewide by Wednesday

By GARY A. WARNER AND BRYCE DOLE
EO MEDIA GROUP

Oregon's statewide COVID-19 restrictions are largely lifting on Wednesday, June 30.

“Effectively, Oregon is 100% open for business,” Gov. Kate Brown said in a press call Friday, June 25.

After the deadline passes, statewide mandates on masks, social distancing and capacity limits of restaurants and venues will be removed.

But Brown and health officials said the crisis for the state is not over.

“Some 98% of people dying from COVID-19 are unvaccinated,” Brown said.

Oregon Health Authority Director Pat Allen said the pandemic is not over, but the management of the crisis will shift to local officials.

County commissioners will be

responsible for public health decisions and the state will only compile statistics and offer assistance.

“Local officials will be responsible for those decisions and for the consequences,” Allen said.

As the risk level framework was set to expire, six counties still remained in high risk status for the final week, including Umatilla County, where only 31% of the total population and 40% of the population over age 16 are vaccinated. Meanwhile eight counties in the state have more than 65% of their population over 16 vaccinated.

Allen warned that areas with high numbers of unvaccinated residents were in danger of infection flare-ups with the limits lifted.

“They're dry tinder,” Allen said.

Setting a firm deadline was needed as the state headed into the popular July 4 weekend, Brown said.

“Obviously businesses and ven-

ues need certainty on reopening,” she said.

She touted the state's COVID restrictions as life-saving, noting the state had one of the lowest per capita COVID-19 death rates in the nation.

Also on June 25, the Oregon Department of Education released new guidance for school districts to prepare for the upcoming school year. According to the new framework, schools will be expected to offer full-time, in-person instruction, and rules on masks and social distancing will become “advisory” instead of mandatory.

Umatilla County officials concerned

Among counties in Northeastern Oregon, Umatilla County is an outlier when it comes to risk levels. Baker, Union, Wallowa

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