

Crashes

Continued from A1

crashes that began at around noon near milepost 230, stretched 1.75 miles and involved more than 170 vehicles, according to press releases from the Oregon Department of Transportation and Oregon State Police. OSP on Feb. 22 reported 17 patients were transported from the crash scene, with an additional two who were transported after they arrived at Pendleton Convention Center, which served as a reunification hub for people in the crash.

Interstate 84 shuts down

The mass crash shut down the westbound and eastbound lanes of the freeway in Eastern Oregon. Eastbound remained closed Feb. 21 between Exit 216, 6 miles east of Pendleton, and Exit 265 at La Grande, while westbound was closed to between Exit 374 at Ontario and Exit 216.

The Oregon Department of Transportation announced on Feb. 22 the eastbound lanes reopened at about midnight, but the westbound lanes were not clear until about 6 a.m.

Oregon State Police, local law enforcement, fire and medics from agencies throughout Umatilla and Union counties responded to the crashes, along with help from Walla Walla County in Washington. Pendleton Fire Chief Jim Critchley said the wrecks stretched for a mile. The Hyatts described the emergency response as impressive.

Responding officers were notified of additional crashes while they were arriving, and then once on scene, officers could hear crashes occurring behind them, according to a press release from the OSP. The Hyatts heard those crashes, too.

“Bam, bam, bam,” Carter Hyatt said. “They just kept hitting.”

Marjorie said the sounds were unnerving. They stayed in their vehicle, even without heat, for protection.

Capt. Merle Laci with the La Grande Fire Department said two ambulances and one rescue rig were on scene from Union County, with crews from Union and Island City fire departments on standby. The La Grande Fire Department sent eight personnel to the scene.

As of 3:35 p.m. Feb. 21, rescue vehicles and ambulances from the La Grande Fire Department had returned to the station, according to Laci. La Grande Fire Department confirmed they had transported three individuals from the scene to Grande Ronde Hospital.

Nick Oatley, spokesperson with Umatilla County Fire District No. 1, confirmed the Hermiston-based fire department also responded, sending three ambulances to the scene. Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, reported it did not receive any crash victims.



Carter Hyatt/Contributed Photo

Jacob Hyatt of Yelm, Washington, stands near his family's Nissan Pathfinder Monday afternoon, Feb. 21, 2022, following its crash into this trailer on the westbound side of Interstate 84 near milepost 230. The Pathfinder was one of 170 vehicles Oregon State Police reported were involved in a series of crashes in the area starting at about noon.

Hospitals at the ready

Elaine LaRoche, incident commander at Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande, activated the hospital's incident command system, according to a press release from Mardi Ford, public information officer.

“We are preparing to support any patients sent our way with emergency services and medical care,” Ford said in the release. “We do not have any news on distribution of patients to be sent our way. However, we are prepared to assist in this emergency. We are cooperating fully with all regional partners, including our media contacts, to do what we can to keep everyone informed. Our primary mission, however, is to provide emergency services and medical care to patients in need. Once we know more, we will issue an update.”

Emily Smith, director of communications for St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton, reported that as of 3 p.m., the hospital received six patients from the crash.

“The patients' statuses are unknown at this time,” she reported, “and no information on ages etc. is available to the media at this time.”

Smith also explained how St. Anthony responds to these kinds of crises.

“When we receive word of an incident like this, the hospital activates

Code D, or disaster response,” according to Smith. “Available staff (off-duty) are called and asked to come in based on current personnel needs as well as staffing for the next shift. Patients are seen in the Emergency Department as well as other care areas of the hospital as appropriate for their level of injury. We have an extensive disaster plan that is drilled with local emergency response teams to ensure we are prepared for situations like this when they arise.”

Pendleton Convention Center provides respite

The Hyatts said emergency personnel checked on them often, and they appreciated that. And many of the other people in the crash helped each other, they said, offering water and making sure people were OK.

“There were people, regular people,” Marjorie Hyatt said. “All that was really nice.”

When school buses arrived to carry the Hyatts and so many more off the mountain, they said they had to cross the median to the eastbound lanes. Marjorie banged her knee on the fence, but firefighters were right there to help. And when they got on the bus, she said, the Oregon State Police trooper, who was

the person who had checked on them, assisted them onto the bus.

The buses took groups to the Pendleton Convention Center, where its manager, Pat Beard, said while the facility was holding events that day, it opened rooms for the people in the crash and provided what hospitality it could while they waited for rides from family or friends or made arrangements for other accommodations.

The center also served as something of a base of operations for law enforcement, Umatilla County Public Health and more. Beard praised the coordination he witnessed between the different groups.

The Hyatts were among the last from the crash to still be at the convention center that evening. Bags of chips and other snacks lined the long tables of the large room they were in. A family member was on the way to help get them home, they said, probably around 7 that night.

The Nissan, as far as they knew, still was at the site of the crash. Carter said all their luggage was in the car, so he anticipated making a trip back to gather their belongings.

The Hyatts said they had never experienced anything like this emergency, and they did not want to be in another. But their concerns were for others.

“I hope everyone gets out,” Marjorie said.

Industry

Continued from A1

city had taken notice of development in the area.

“Nothing gangbusters,” Morgan said of the area, historically. “But it was starting to fill up.”

The city, then, was looking for ways to accommodate small light industrial-type operations in the future, he said. Paving Southeast 10th Street and bringing in utilities creates access to the parcels within the area.

SHIP already shows signs of success, beginning with Meyer Distributing.

The distribution company purchased 40 acres on SHIP. Its warehouse, which recently began operations with around 70 employees, takes up about a third of the total Meyer property, Morgan said. Meyer plans to expand in the future, eventually making full use of the property.

Additionally, A-1 Industrial Hose and Supply is building a 30,000-square foot building at the park.

“They're a good, local, small light industrial business that has just been expanding and expanding and expanding,” Morgan said. “They don't need 40 acres, but they just need a couple of acres at a time. This was kind of tailor made for an operation like that.”

Creating employment diversity

Morgan said he envisions a future in which several more businesses like A-1 set up shop at the industrial park and help create a diverse employment base.

“We don't necessary just want to have a parcel that's 200 acres that can accommodate one really large development,” he said. “This helps accommodate the machine shops, the electricians, the plumbers, those types of operations that need an acre for a laydown yard and equipment.”

The city's interest in a diverse set of employers is due to a hard lesson, Morgan said.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Mark Morgan, the city of Hermiston's assistant city manager, indicates infrastructure improvements on a map Feb. 16, 2022, at the South Hermiston Industrial Park.

The closure of Hermiston Foods in 2017 resulted in the loss of about 200 permanent, full-time jobs. At the same time, Union Pacific scaled down some of its machine shop operations. Though Morgan said large employers are valued and are important, it is important for Hermiston to “not be beholden to one, single, large employer.”

Attracting business

Morgan agreed his situation with SHIP is something akin to the plot of the 1989 classic baseball movie “Field of Dreams.” In the film, a farmer builds a baseball field in the middle of his crop. A ghostly voice tells the character that if he creates the ball field, people will come.

Likewise, the city has placed infrastructure and is looking for businesses to fill the space.

Sometimes, he said, communication with interested businesses is frustrating. Companies learn of the area and express interest, he said. Then, they sometimes ask to see the city's top vacant buildings. When he tells them there are not any vacant buildings, they lose their excitement for Hermiston.

He said the best the city can offer now is space with electricity, roads and plumbing. SHIP gives businesses area for development. Morgan called this “economic gardening.”

“Even though there isn't an existing building ready for somebody to come in, the ground is ready for someone to come in,” he said. “They can throw up a building pretty darned quick.”

Morgan said SHIP is something that will bring in new developments over years.



Join us for
IF:Hermiston 2022!

March 4-5, 2022 at New Hope Church

Register today at

<http://www.tinyurl.com/ifhermiston2022>



TOYOTA

CHOOSE FROM 9 OF YOUR FAVORITE NEW 2022 TOYOTA MODELS

CAMRY, CAMRY HYBRID, COROLLA, COROLLA HYBRID, HIGHLANDER, HIGHLANDER HYBRID, RAV4, RAV4 HYBRID & TUNDRA

2.99%
APR FINANCING

72
MO.

WITH \$15.19
PER \$1,000
BORROWED



TOYOTA.COM

See Your Local
Toyota Dealer



Prototypes shown with options. Extra-cost colors shown. Offers end 2/28/2022. APR on approved credit from Toyota Financial Services. 2.99% APR financing for 72 months with \$15.19 per \$1,000 borrowed. Annual Percentage Rate available to buyers with approved Tier 1+ through Tier 1 (excellent) credit. All offers subject to approved credit, see dealer for more information. Cannot be combined with other offers. Offer available in AK, ID, MT, OR, WA regardless of buyer's residency; void where prohibited. Does not include College Grad or Military Rebate. Does not include taxes, license, title/registration fees, dealer fees and Oregon tax (.05%). *ToyotaCare covers normal factory scheduled maintenance for two years or 25,000 miles, whichever comes first. Certain models require a different maintenance schedule as described in their Maintenance Guide. 24-hour Roadside Assistance is also included for two years, unlimited mileage. Roadside Assistance does not include parts and fluids, except emergency fuel delivery. See Toyota dealer for details and exclusions. Valid only in the continental U.S.