

Tragedy in Cape Falcon after father, children swept into ocean

The Astorian

A 7-year-old girl died and a 4-year-old boy is missing after being swept into the ocean Saturday afternoon off Falcon Cove.

The Oregon State Police said Jeremy Stiles, 47, of Portland, was holding his children on the shore about 12:30 p.m. when they were caught by a wave.

Stiles struggled back to shore, the state police said, and the girl was helped from the water by a Manzanita police officer.

Stiles and the girl were taken by ambulance to Providence Seaside Hospital, where the girl was pronounced dead.

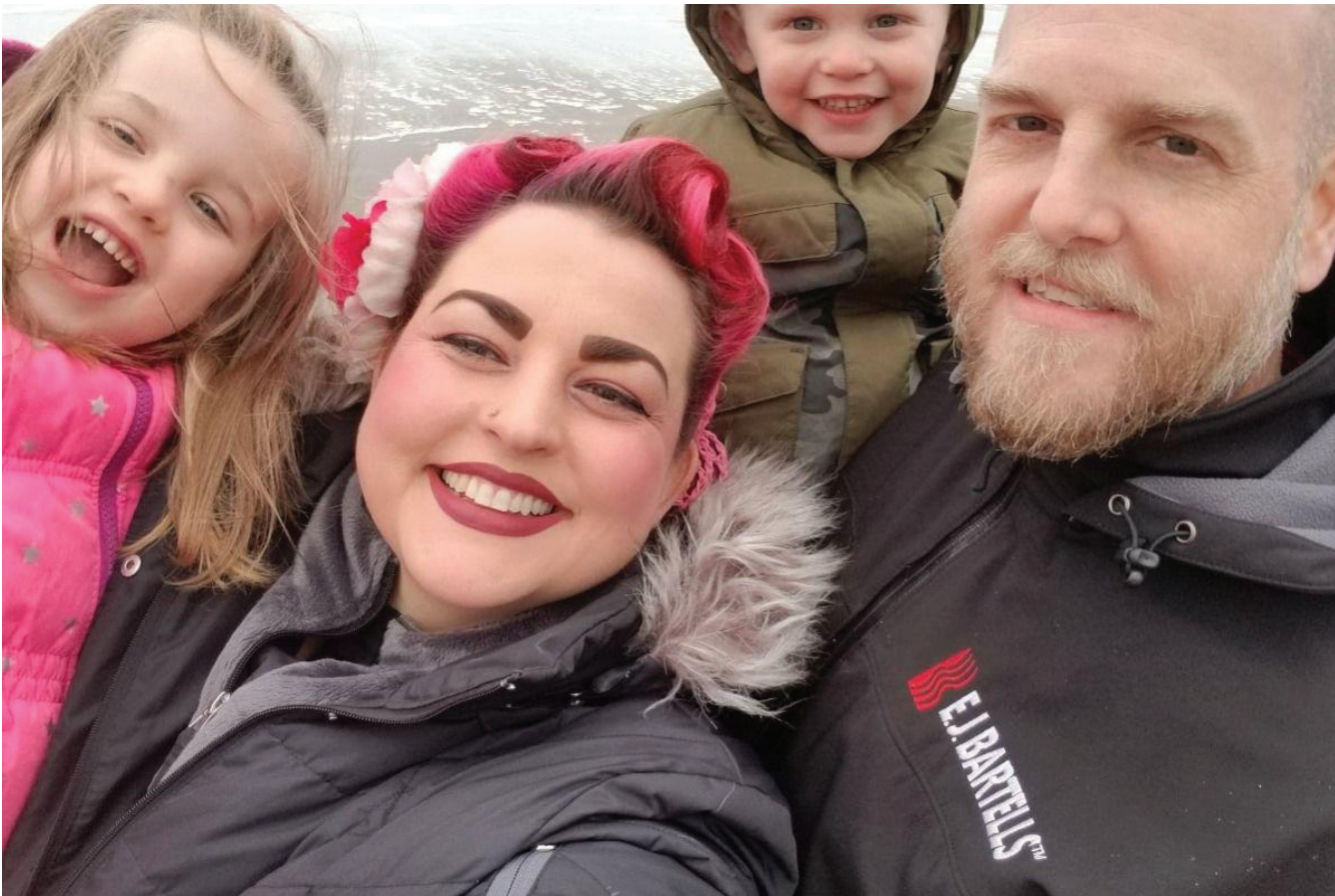
The U.S. Coast Guard searched for the boy by helicopter, but were unable to find him. The search was suspended at sunset.

In a GoFundMe page set up for the family, the girl was identified as Lola and the missing boy was William.

The page describes “a tragic accident at Cannon Beach when a sneaker wave crept up onto the beach trail they were walking on and pulled them out to sea.”

The page — www.gofundme.com/f/stiles-family-support — said that Stiles is recovering from hypothermia at Providence Seaside.

“The Stiles/Romaine families want to thank everyone for their thoughts and prayers and especially the support of the first responders and Coast Guard during this horrific tragedy for our family. First responders have reported that they were on an off-beach trail and when the waves came up and pulled



Gofundme

them in,” the families said in a statement.

“Our hearts as you can imagine could not be more broken as both children were loved beyond measure by our entire family and so many others.

“We are requesting support to help the Stiles family with funeral expenses as well as the grief and trauma supports for the parents and extended family to recover from such a tragic loss.”

Joanne Cornelius said she had just finished taking photos of the breathtaking waves and extreme high tide outside her home when a frantic woman pounded on her window and asked her to call 911.

“It’s a dangerous beach. It’s a thing that people

have to be aware of in winter at the beach at the Oregon Coast. There’s dangerous waves and when the signs are up, people have a tendency to walk right by,”

said Cornelius, who recalled seeing the family heading toward the beach a few minutes earlier as she returned from photographing the waves.

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“It was tragic, just absolutely tragic.”

After she called 911, she was patched through to the Coast Guard and directed them to the Falcon Cove area, a rugged and rocky stretch of beach.

Then, she saw a grim procession: The girl’s body brought up the path and to an ambulance, followed by her father, in shock and distraught as he was bundled into a car with warming blankets.

A woman with the group was in hysterics, with blood on her face, Cornelius said.

“I tried to get her to go into my house to warm up, but she refused. She was wearing no shoes and she was soaking wet,” Cornelius said.

The Coast Guard urged the public on Saturday to stay away from jetties and rocks along the shore because of the dangerous surf.

A high surf warning and a coastal hazard message were issued for the North Coast through Saturday afternoon. The hazard message was extended through Sunday afternoon.

Officials said to expect large waves and strong surf. Seas were expected to build up to 26 feet, with breakers from 35 to 40 feet.

There was an increased possibility for sneaker waves and rip currents, so people were advised to stay away from the water’s edge. People were also advised to stay away from large logs on the beach as the water can easily lift or roll logs.

Flooding, up to one foot above ground level, may occur during high tides. Officials also warned that structures near the surf zone could be inundated by waves.

The waves may cause beach erosion.

The Columbia River Bar status was red, meaning no — or very limited — inbound or outbound vessel traffic.

A vigil for the children washed into the ocean at Falcon Cove over the weekend is planned for Wednesday at the Hoffman Center for the Arts in Manzanita.

People are invited to gather together at 5 p.m. After a few brief words by a memorial celebrant, the darkened room will be illuminated with gentle light. People are welcome to stay until 6 p.m.

Nicole Bales and R.J. Marx of The Astorian and Gillian Flaccus of the Associated Press contributed to this report.

King tides provide peek at rising seas

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

The second of this winter’s three king tide events hit last week, sending tidal surges up to more than 10.5 feet around the North Coast.

King tides, also known as perigean spring tides, are the highest-predicted tides of the year. They occur with the orbital alignment of the earth, sun and moon, pushing tides higher than usual and providing a glimpse into a future of rising sea levels.

By the time the tide peaked at around 10.5 feet Tuesday, water from Youngs River had risen within inches of the lanes of travel on Oregon Highway 202, one of the most striking local examples of tidal effects on infrastructure.

“The biggest effect is erosion along the shoulder of the road,” said Kevin Werst, a transportation maintenance manager with the state Department of Transportation.

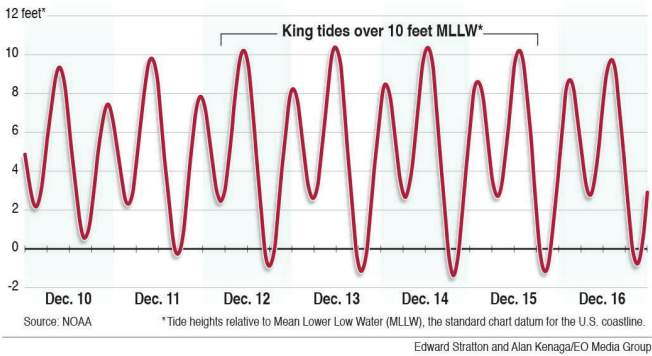
When tides peak in Seaside, the city’s Public Works Director Dale McDowell said, he sends staff to monitor The Cove, a thin strip of rocky beach littered with driftwood and popular with surfers and other beachgoers. “We basically station a guy down by The Cove, because the waves can throw logs up,” he said, adding the city will sometimes close the entire beach down.

The city also sends staff to watch for debris blockages during high flows under the city’s bridges and for erosion around its sewage plant, located next to the mouth of the Necanicum River. McDowell said the river’s flow comes right up to the edge of the plant, where a couple of years ago the city installed a barricade to protect against erosion.

Werst and other local public works officials said king tides in themselves don’t pose an immediate threat, unless combined with high winds and rain during storms. The effects of this week’s king tides, unaccom-

King tides surge in Warrenton, North Coast

King tides, which occur when the earth, moon and sun align, brought tidal surges of more than 10 feet Monday through Thursday in Warrenton’s Skipanon River.



panied by foul weather, were benign.

“On the Oregon Coast in the wintertime, we have sea level rise of 18 inches in the winter, because of various reasons,” said Patrick Corcoran, a coastal hazards specialist with Oregon State University’s Extension Service in Astoria. “When you combine that with king tides, that’s when things start flooding.”

In Warrenton, the king tide peaked at more than 10.7 feet in the Skipanon River Tuesday, Jan. 7. Collin Stelzig, Warrenton’s city engineer, said the city can experience tides of 11 feet amid storm surges multiple times of year, without issues.

“We’re protected by levees, so we don’t necessarily have an impact from these tides,” he said.

Stelzig said the city has been part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s National Flood Insurance Program since 1978 and faced tides as high as nearly 12.6 feet in 1983, but has never had a claim for flooding.

The situation in the Pacific Northwest isn’t as bad as Florida, where one-eighth of the homes could be underwater by 2100 if sea levels rise as predicted, according to real estate company Zillow.

“Our geography is different,” said Meg Reed, a coastal shores specialist with the Oregon Coastal Management Program. “We don’t have a lot of low-lying developed beaches like Florida.”

Sea level rise is mitigated on much of the West Coast by

the Juan de Fuca plate sliding under the North American plate, causing a tectonic uplift of between 1.5 and 3 millimeters per year. But at some point, Reed said, sea level rise will likely outpace the tectonic uplift, because of exponentially increasing warming.

According to a 2012 report from the National Research Council, sea levels on the West Coast could rise 3 to 9 inches by 2030, and 7 to 19 inches by 2050, relative to 2000 levels. According to the report, the rate of global sea level rise increased from

about 1.7 millimeters per year during the 20th century to 3.1 millimeters per year since 1993.

“We know that we have a very dynamic winter climate, so even a little bit of sea level rise means those storms will get more intense,” Reed said, adding chronic issues like erosion and landslides could worsen.

Add to the list of problems a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, which the state Department of Geology and Mineral Industries estimates could sink the land 3 to 7 feet, immediately reversing hundreds of years of tectonic uplift.

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