

Fire Season: No open burning allowed until fall rains

From page 1

The declaration of fire season also means that open burning is closed until significant rains occur in the fall.

As we enter fire season, fire officials want landowners to check areas where burning has been conducted recently, especially any heavy accumulations of piled woody debris. These old burn areas are known to hold hot spots that can come to life under warm and windy conditions. Homeowners should also complete clean-up activities around their home to ensure a fire safe landscape and reduced ignitability of the home.

Mike Simek, Protection Unit Forester with the Department of Forestry indicates that a few simple actions a homeowner can do now can make a big difference as to whether or not your home is at risk of igniting from a wildfire. Within a 100 feet perimeter around the

home, reduce flammable vegetation, remove or prune lower limbs of trees, keep dry grass cut low. Also relocate wood piles away from house, and clean roof and gutters of needles and leaves. More information on fire safe landscaping practices and reducing structural ignitability is available from local fire districts and the Oregon Department of Forestry.

The predicted hot temperatures combined with the increased use of fireworks during the Fourth of July weekend has all fire agencies on alert. "It's a definite concern this time of year and the message should be clear – use fireworks responsibly, exercising extreme caution and that means no use in areas of dry grass, brush or forest vegetation", says Simek. Fires resulting from fireworks can result in significant liabilities, consider the following:

- Start a fire with fireworks

and you can be held responsible to reimburse the landowner for the value of real property losses and timber damaged or destroyed.

- If the fire occurs on private forestlands protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry, you can be billed for the entire cost of putting out the fire.

- Parents are legally responsible for at least \$5,000 of the costs to put out fires caused by their child's use of fireworks.

- Using fireworks on federal forestland can get you arrested and jailed.

Fire officials urge everyone to use good fire prevention practices whether working or playing in the forests, or in other areas of flammable vegetation.

For information regarding current public and industrial regulations in effect for local forests, contact the Columbia City office, Oregon Department of Forestry at 503-397-2636.

County jobless rates still climbing

Columbia County's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose to 15.7 percent in May, a significant increase from the previous month (15.2%) and the year before (6.2%). The rate was above the statewide rate (12.4%) and the

national rate (9.4%). Total employment fell by 126 to 21,651 and the number of unemployed people rose by 19 to 3,675. Total employment this May was 1,103 fewer than one year before and there were 2,308 more people unemployed this year.

More people needing food stamps

As Oregon's unemployment figures hit historic levels, the need for basic economic support such as food stamps and cash assistance continues to grow, the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) announced on June 16.

Need for cash assistance (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families or TANF) increased nearly 30 percent over May of 2008. Only very low-income families qualify for this assistance – the monthly income limit for a family of three is \$528 – and currently 25,509 families statewide are receiving

assistance. Washington County saw the largest percentage jump with 50 percent more families needing assistance than last year at this time.

"We began to see the huge increases of people coming into our branches last year and those numbers continue to grow today," says Xochitl Esparza, TANF program manager for the DHS Children, Adults and Families Division.

The need for food stamps also continues to grow. The most recent statewide figures for May show that 601,706 Ore-
See Food Stamps, page 21

Community Calendar

VERNONIA			MIST-BIRKENFELD		
Alcoholics Anonymous	Mondays	6:30 p.m., 410 North Street	M-BRFPD Board Business Mtg.	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Alcoholics Anonymous	Thursdays (Big Book Study)	7:00 p.m., 410 North Street	M-BRFPD Board Workshop	4th Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
American Legion Post #119	2nd Thursday	7:00 p.m., 627 Adams Avenue	M-B Ambulance Drill	1st & 2nd Thursdays	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Booster Club	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., VHS Library	M-B Fire Drill	1st & 2nd Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Boy Scout Troop 201	Tuesdays	7:00 p.m., Scout Cabin	M-B Helping Circle	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Boy Scout Troop 860	Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., LDS Church	M-B SAR Drill	3rd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Cemetery Beautification Comm.	2nd Thursday	6:30 p.m., City Hall	M-B Volunteer Assoc.	1st Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
CERT	4th Wednesday	For Info Call 503-429-3018	Natal Grange	2nd Wednesday	7:30 p.m., Natal Grange Hall
Chamber of Commerce	2nd Wednesday	For Info Call 503-429-6081	T.O.P.S.	Mondays	9:00 a.m., Main Fire Station
Community Coalition	2nd Monday	12:30 p.m. School District Ofc.	Upr Nehalem Watershed Council	For date call 429-0869	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Cub Scout Pack 201	Scout Cabin	For Info Call 503-429-4250			
Friends of the Library	1st Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Vernonia Library			
Girl Scouts, Neighborhood 4-2		For Info Call 503-819-0143			
Hands On Art Committee	1st & 3rd Thursdays	4:00 p.m., City Hall			
Izaak Walton League	3rd Thursday	For location call 503-429-7193			
Lions Club	1st & 3rd Tuesdays	6:30 p.m., Buckhorn Restaurant			
Municipal Airport Committee	4th Thursday	7:00 p.m., City Hall			
Pioneer Museum		For Info Call 503-429-3713			
Public Works Committee	4th Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Hall			
Vernonia Cares Directors		For Info call 503-429-1414			
Vernonia City Council	1st & 3rd Mondays	7:00 p.m., City Hall			
Vernonia Community PTA	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., WGS Library			
Vernonia Grange	3rd Monday	7:00 p.m., Grange Hall			
Vernonia Health Center	2nd Monday	6:00 p.m., 510 Bridge St.			
Vernonia Learning Center	1st Wednesday	6:00 p.m., VLC			
Vernonia Parks Committee	3rd Wednesday	6:30 p.m., City Hall			
Vernonia Planning Comm.	1st & 3rd Thursdays	7:00 p.m., City Hall			
Vernonia Pride	2nd Thursday	1:00 p.m., City Hall			
Vernonia Ridge Riders	Last Thursday	7:00 p.m., Senior Center			
Vernonia RFPD Board	2nd Tuesday	6:00 p.m., Fire Station			
Vernonia School Board	2nd Thursday	6:00 p.m., District Office			
Vernonia Sr. Center Board	2nd Friday	1:00 p.m., Senior Center			
Vernonia Transfer Station	2nd & 4th Saturdays, 8 a.m.-2 p.m.	Behind VHS			
Vern. Volunteer Ambulance Assoc.	1st, 3rd & 4th Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station			
Vernonia Volunteer Firefighters	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station			
WOEC Directors	3rd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., WOEC			
			BANKS		
			Alcoholics Anonymous	Fridays	7:30 p.m., Methodist Church
			Alcoholics Anonymous	Wednesdays	7:30 p.m., Methodist Church
			American Legion Post #90	2nd Tuesdays	7:30 p.m., Main Street Post
			Banks City Council	2nd Tuesday	7:30 p.m., City Hall
			Banks Fire District #13	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Station 13
			Banks Library Commission	3rd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Library
			Banks Planning Commission	Last Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Hall
			Banks School Board	2nd Monday	7:30 p.m., Jr. High Library
			Banks Youth Group	Sundays, Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., UMC Youth Bldg.
			Chamber of Commerce	1st Thursday	12:30 p.m., Fire District Office
			CPO 14	3rd Monday	7:00 p.m., City Library
			Friends of the Library	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Library
			Lions Club	1st & 3rd Mondays	7:00 p.m., Brown Derby
			Sunset Park Assoc.	3rd Wednesday	8:00 p.m., Gun Club
			T.O.P.S.	Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., Administration Bldg.
			COLUMBIA COUNTY (All meet in St. Helens unless otherwise noted.)		
			Board of Commissioners	Wednesdays	1:00 p.m., Courthouse
			Citizens for Senior Justice	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Sunset Park Church
			Columbia Soil & Water District	3rd Wednesday	7:30 p.m., NRCS, 2514 Sykes
			County Fair Board	2nd Monday	6:00 p.m., Fairgrounds 4-H Bldg.
			County Parks Commission	3rd Tuesday	Times vary, 1054 Oregon St.
			Mental Health Advisory Comm.	Quarterly	For Info call 503-397-7211
			Comm. on Children & Families	3rd Thursday	5:30 p.m. OSU Ext., 505 N. Hwy. 30
			Local Alcohol & Drug Plann. Comm.	Quarterly	For Info call 503-397-7211

Organizations and meeting dates not listed may be included by calling 429-9410 or by mail to The INDEPENDENT, 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064.