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Maureen Roxbury
Information Officer
PO Box 33
Irrigon OR 97844-0033
maureen@csepp.org
Office: 541.922.5262
FAX: 541.922.5263
Pager: 503.441.7280
Cell: 541.256.0118

Casey White
Director of
Community Relations
Umatilla-Morrow ESD
541.966.3115
casey.white@umesd.k12.or.us

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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School and Bus Safety to be Featured in Demonstration

Irrigon, OR - It's a bus...it's a classroom...it's a classroom on wheels! On Wednesday, March 7th, starting at 10 a.m., a "prototype" bus will be the focus of a demonstration being held at AC Houghton Elementary School in Irrigon, Oregon. "For some time now, we've been concerned about losing communications with a school bus and not be able to locate it, in the event of a chemical incident at the Umatilla Chemical Depot," stated Casey Beard, Director of Morrow County Emergency Management. Most schools have a special air purification system installed in a fixed location, allowing students and staff to shelter in place in an over-pressurized area of their campus; however schools in Boardman, Stanfield, Irrigon and one private school in Hermiston have chosen to evacuate in the event of a chemical incident. These schools have buses parked on campus, ready to mobilize at a moments notice, with certified drivers on staff. These buses, as well as others, have the potential of being retrofitted with some high-tech equipment that will allow them to be tracked using Global Positioning System (GPS). The Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP) funded the prototype and hope they will be able to fund several more buses in the near future. The bus is also equipped with a signal amplifier, allowing it to become a "Wi-Fi hotspot" within the Immediate Response Zone (a 9-mile radius surrounding the Umatilla Chemical Depot). "Students could theoretically set up a mobile classroom in

the bus, which would allow them to work on projects while out on field trips - within the coverage area,” stated Beard.

CSEPP, Morrow County School District, Mid-Columbia Bus Company, ez Wireless, Morrow County Sheriff’s Office and the Umatilla-Morrow Education Service District (UMESD) have been working closely with AC Houghton Elementary School Principal, John Sebastian, to prepare for Wednesday’s demonstration.

In addition to demonstrating technology on the bus, intelligent transportation systems, use of law enforcement and cameras for school safety will be on display. This demonstration is by invitation only, those invited include: school administrators, Education Service Districts, government officials, transportation officials and law enforcement. The purpose of this demonstration is to show what can be done for school and bus safety.

The demonstration will last approximately 2 hours and will block North First Street directly in front of AC Houghton Elementary School and City Hall. Please avoid this area during the time of the demonstration as it will be congested. The bus company has an alternate drop-off and pick-up zone that day, for students at AC Houghton; staff will be parking in a different area to allow for guest parking close to the demonstration area.

Residents in Irrigon will see more than average traffic in town for this demonstration. Morrow County Emergency Management Staff hope the demonstration will not affect Irrigon residents’ normal daily routine.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Maureen Roxbury with CSEPP at 541.256.0118 or Casey White with UMESD at 541.966.3115.

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