

# City Bridges

Fall 2006

News to keep you connected to Albany City government

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## City Seeks to Renew Five-Year Levy for Ambulance, Fire, and Police Services

The Albany City Council will ask voters in November to renew a five-year serial levy for ambulance, fire, and police services.

Albany voters approved the City's first public safety levy in November 2002. That levy raised Albany property taxes by 95 cents per thousand dollars of assessed value beginning in tax year 2003-2004. The proposed renewal levy would remain at 95 cents with all proceeds of the levy being used for specific public safety purposes.

The levy includes money to retain four certified police officers; a communications specialist (dispatcher); a civilian employee who analyzes crime data and coordinates required officer training; three civilian employees (community service officers) who take reports in instances that do not require a certified officer; and overtime pay when officers are needed for special enforcement in City parks.

In the Fire Department, the levy supports six firefighter/paramedics, a deputy fire marshal, and a fire/life safety educator and funding to assist with reductions in Medicare reimbursements for the ambu-



lance program. The levy also includes money that is set aside for eventual replacement of aging ambulances, fire engines, and other equipment.

The owner of property assessed at \$200,000 would continue to pay \$190 per year in property taxes, or about \$16 per month.

Today, six police officers are on patrol duty on each shift in Albany; the population of Albany is about 46,000. When the public safety levy was first approved in 2002, Albany police were receiving 90-100 calls for service every 24 hours; today, police receive an average of 186 calls per day.

In emergencies, an officer is able to respond in about four and a half minutes, down from five minutes four years ago. Police Chief Ed Boyd said that certified officers are able to respond more quickly because of the community service officers (CSOs) who handle more routine calls. Since those CSOs were added to the Police Department, they have handled more than 16,000 calls, the Chief said.

The four certified officers supported by the levy have allowed officers to be assigned to drug and traffic enforcement, which Albany citizens have identified as their two most important community-safety concerns.

The crime analyst assists patrol officers and detectives with investigations of major crimes including recent cases of homicide, rape, and racketeering; in drug investigations; analyzing statistics, patterns, and trends in criminal activity; and coordinating special projects that require complex analysis.

The 2002 levy allowed the Fire Department to move from a minimum of 15 to 17 firefighter/paramedics on duty each 24-hour shift. In 2001, Fire personnel responded to 4,895 emergency calls; that number increased by 22 percent to 5,996 for fiscal year 2005-2006. The levy allowed the Fire Department to staff an additional dedicated ambulance which provides 24-hour coverage with a fire truck and ambulance at the fire station on 34th Avenue. Before the levy, this station was staffed for a truck or an ambulance, depending on the emergency. This left that station without any staff for long portions of the day due to the number of emergency calls in the area.

The North Albany station still operates with a truck or ambulance; but with the levy staff, that station does not need to help with calls outside its primary area as often.

The Albany Fire Department provides fire protection and suppression services in

the city of Albany and surrounding areas with a population of nearly 51,400 people in 81 square miles. It provides emergency medical service to 54,500 people in a 205-square-mile area. The Albany Police Department provides police protection, crime prevention and criminal investigation within the city of Albany's 16 square miles, for a population of about 46,000.

The Linn County Sheriff's Office will also have a law enforcement levy on the November 7 General Election ballot. That levy provides for different services



than those proposed in the City's levy.

The Linn County levy supports sheriff's patrol deputies and detectives who are the police force in rural areas of Linn County and its smaller cities. It pays for operating the Linn County Jail and contributes to operations of the Linn County Juvenile Department and District Attorney's Office.

Many of the juvenile referrals and a majority of adult criminal cases handled by the District Attorney come from Albany police. Sheriff's deputies provide backup for Albany police officers. Persons arrested by Albany police are booked and housed at the Linn County Jail.



## A Message from the City Manager:

The City of Albany is asking citizens to renew a 95 cent per thousand property tax levy in November in order to maintain emergency services at existing levels. Albany police and fire services are funded mostly by property taxes that are subject to limits only voters can change. Government employees may not use public resources to advocate for or argue against issues that appear on election ballots; so this brief column will attempt to explain the proposed levy rather than try to persuade voters to approve or reject it.

Albany voters approved a request for a five-year serial levy in 2002 to support emergency services. The money is used to pay salaries of police officers, firefighter/paramedics and some support personnel. If the levy is renewed, it will

not cover all the costs of running the Police and Fire Departments.

Albany, like most cities, has a permanent property tax rate that produces revenue to support a wide range of services. Property taxes are used to help pay for parks and recreation services, the library, planning, and some administrative costs in addition to the Police and Fire Departments. The City's permanent tax rate is \$6.40 per thousand dollars of assessed value, or \$1,280 a year for the owner of a \$200,000 home. Emergency services require the largest portion of city property taxes. The budgets for the Police and Fire Departments, not including ambulance service, were over \$14 million last year; and the City collected a little more than \$18.7 million

in property taxes. If voters reject the proposed renewal of the 95 cent levy, the City will not receive an estimated \$3 million when it expires following fiscal year 2007. This number represents roughly 21 percent of the annual budget for emergency services (excluding ambulance). The ambulance service is provided through the Fire Department, but is supported by user fees rather than property taxes.

I find that my attention wanders when I'm reading stories that involve too many numbers. Unfortunately, it's difficult to explain tax proposals without relying on some basic numbers and calculations. Perhaps the most important number voters will be asked to consider in November is the cost per property owner

of renewing the levy. The owner of a \$200,000 property, for example, must decide if it is worth it to him or her to continue paying about \$16 per month to help support emergency services. This amount will vary, of course, depending on the value of a voter's property, but the decision about the value received for the money invested remains the same. Citizens who have questions about the levy proposal are welcome to contact me at City Hall. I cannot argue for or against the proposal, but I will do my best to explain it.

Wes Hare, City Manager

City of Albany Directory

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Dick Olsen 926-7348

Doug Killin 926-6829

Ward II Councilors:

Sharon Konopa 926-6812

Ralph Reid, Jr. 928-7382

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Bessie Johnson 791-2494

Jeff Christman 926-0528

City Manager:

Wes Hare 917-7505

City Hall Phone Numbers

General Information 917-7500

Ambulance Billing 917-7710

Building Inspection 917-7553

City Council Message 917-7503

City Manager 917-7500

Downtown

Carnegie Library 917-7585

Economic Development 917-7639

Engineering 917-7676

Finance Office 917-7500

Fire Department 917-7700

Human Resources 917-7500

Main Library 917-7580

Mayor's Message 917-7502

Municipal Court 917-7740

Parks & Recreation 917-7777

Planning and Zoning 917-7550

Police Department 917-7680

Public Information Office 917-7507

Senior Center 917-7760

Transit 917-7667

Water and Sewer Billing 917-7547

Water/Sewer/Streets 917-7600

**Emergencies**  
(Fire, Police, Ambulance)  
**Dial 911**

City Bridges Info

City Bridges is published by an editorial team from the City of Albany. Questions and input about this newsletter can be directed to the City Manager's Office, 333 Broadalbin SW, P.O. Box 490, Albany, OR 97321-0144.

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# October 4 is International Walk & Bike to School Day

Recent surveys among schools in North Albany show that less than 10 percent of our children regularly walk or bike to school while national polls claim that about 13 percent of children routinely walk or bike. Less than 30 years ago, 66 percent of school-aged children either walked or rode their bicycles to and from school. We see so many statistics in our daily lives that we are often tempted to ask "So what?" when the latest numbers about some pressing social problem are presented to us. The fact that children ride buses or cars to reach school doesn't seem like a bad thing, particularly in an area that receives as much rain as Albany.

The decline in walking and biking to school is representative of the trend toward inactive, obese American children. According to the American Obesity Association, about 15.5 percent of adolescents (ages 12 to 19) and 15.3 percent of children (ages 6 to 11) are obese. The increase in obesity among American youth over the past two decades is dramatic.

Obesity rates for young children have more than doubled while rates have more than tripled for adolescents. The trend toward more sedentary lifestyles did not happen overnight and will not be easily changed, short of catastrophic increases in energy costs. Education is a much less painful and less expensive approach to change.

The recently formed Albany Safe Routes to School Committee seeks to promote walking and biking to school. The committee is focused on October 4, 2006, which is International Walk & Bike to School Day. Parent groups at targeted schools will be asked to organize events to encourage walking and biking. "Walking" school buses, prizes, and biking groups will all be part of the celebration as parents

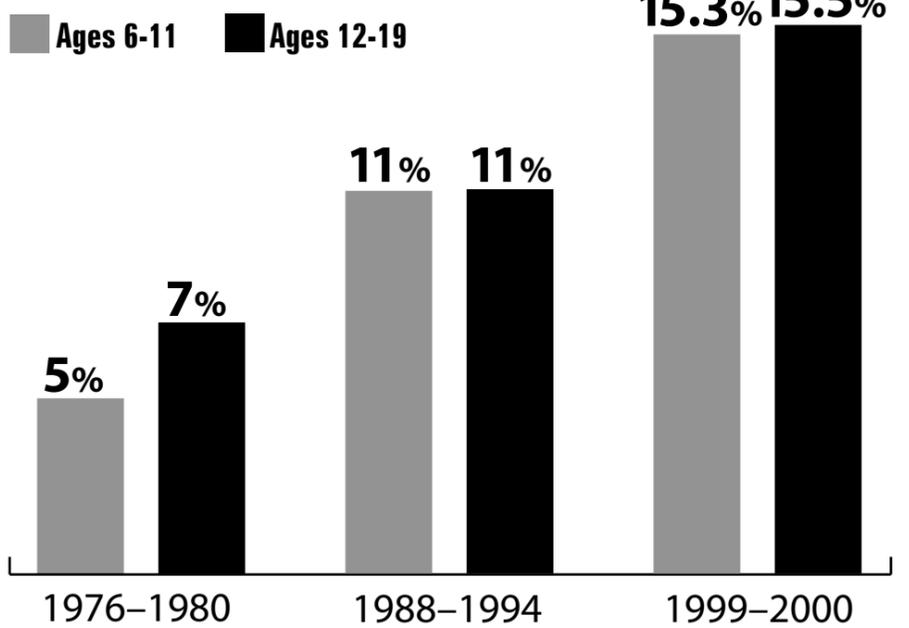
work to promote healthier lifestyles for their children.

Interested parents are encouraged to contact their school about this

event. Even if the school is not participating this year, children should be asked to walk or bike to school on October 4.



## Prevalence of Obese Children at the 95th percentile of Body Mass Index (BMI)



## Treatment Plant Expansion Construction Begins

The largest public project in the City of Albany's history is underway at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, 310 Waverly Drive NE.

The City's current plant, which was completed in 1968, was designed to handle up to 20 million gallons of wastewater per day (MGD) during peak wet weather. Wet weather peak flow today often reaches 55 MGD, meaning that dilute untreated sewage overflows into the Calapooia and Willamette Rivers, in violation of state water quality standards.

The new plant is designed to treat up to 68 MGD, taking care of current needs with enough capacity to serve a growing through 2030.

The new plant will use two patented treatment processes available through US Filter: an extended aeration process known as vertical loop reactors (VLRs®) for biological treatment of wastewater and a solids reduction process known as the Cannibal®.

The Cannibal® will screen and significantly reduce the volume of biological solids (biosolids) produced at the treatment plant. Fewer biosolids means lower costs for biosolids dewatering, storage, and land application.

The plant now produces about 670 dry tons of biosolids per year. The biosolids are used as fertilizer on about 500 acres of farmland in Linn County. The Cannibal® process is expected to reduce production to about 70 dry tons per year. The smaller production will be applied to about 50 acres. The City expects to save a significant amount in fuel that is now used to truck biosolids to the fields.

Wildish Building Inc., Springfield, was low bidder for construction of the new plant, at \$50,286,567. The project was designed by engineering firms CH2M Hill, Corvallis, and Carollo Engineering, Portland.

Total estimated project cost is estimated to be \$66,920,000.

For more information on the expansion, call Chip Ullstad with the City's Engineering Division at (541) 917-7635. To find out more about the VLR® process, the Cannibal® process or US Filter, visit the company Web site at [www.usfilter.com](http://www.usfilter.com).



Mayor Chuck McLaran and Congressman Peter DeFazio at the groundbreaking for the expansion project.

## Albany Fire Department Treasure Hunt 2006

Albany Fire Department will host its annual Treasure Hunt from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Saturday, October 7, 2006, at each of the four fire stations. A variety of activities are planned.

- Ember, the Fire Department Dalmatian, will make an appearance.
- At Station 11, 110 Sixth Avenue SE, go for a fire engine ride, try the Junior Fire Fighter Challenge and enjoy some treats.
- See the Jaws of Life in action at Station 12, 120 34th Avenue SW, at 10:30 a.m., 11:45 a.m., and 1:00 p.m. Watch Albany firefighters cut up a car.
- Staff at Station 13, 1980 Three Lakes Road SE, will demonstrate how the aerial truck sprays water and host tours of the fire station.
- At Station 14, 2850 Gibson Hill Road NW, get your picture taken in real firefighter clothing.

Bring your family for a great time and discover the treasures of the Albany Fire Department.



# Police Have New Tool to Locate Stolen Vehicles

The 1995 Honda Civic is the vehicle most frequently stolen in the United States, according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau's 2004 report. Sport utility vehicles, pickups, and minivans are also high on the most-stolen list. The Federal Bureau of Investigation reported 1.2 million vehicles stolen in the U.S. in 2004. The Cadillac Escalade is the most expensive frequently-stolen vehicle at roughly \$40,000 each.

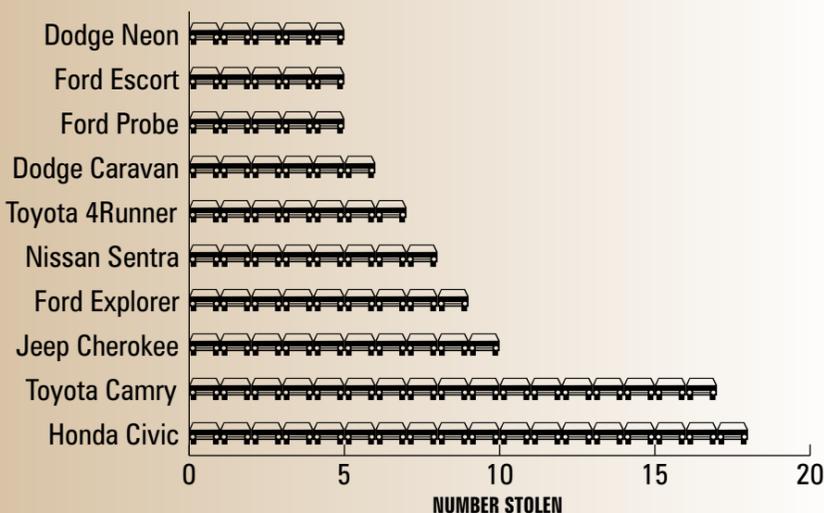
In an effort to reduce losses when vehicles are stolen, several companies have developed tracking and theft recovery devices. The Albany Police Department recently received four tracking computers from LoJack Corporation. The devices have been installed in patrol vehicles at no cost to the City.

When a personal vehicle equipped with a LoJack device is reported stolen, the transponder emits a signal to the computers in the Albany Police Department's patrol vehicles. When a patrol car receives the signal, the officer can locate the stolen vehicle whether it is moving or not.

LoJack devices are available for new and used personal vehicles and can be installed at several Portland-area car dealerships. Costs vary. For more information, visit the LoJack Web site at [www.LoJack.com](http://www.LoJack.com).



## Vehicles Most Frequently Reported Stolen to the Albany Police Department



## TIPS TO PREVENT AUTO THEFT

### Devices

**Alarms:** Alarms make loud warning signals when the door, hood, or trunk of a car is tampered with. Most alarms have motion sensors, impact sensors, and an audible alarm around 120 decibels. Car alarms range from \$150-\$1,000.

**Electronic Disabling:** An ignition kill switch is a switch that needs to be turned on before the car will start. To be effective, the switch must be well hidden. Immobilizers and passkeys are similar. Some vehicle warranties are nullified if a kill switch is installed. Electronic keys are systems that allow a vehicle to operate only with a correctly coded key.

**Metal Disabling Devices:** Locking metal devices can disable the gearshift, gas pedal, brake pedal, hood, or wheels and/or protect a vehicle steering column from being broken. The most common devices are steering wheel locks. A long locking metal bar fits on a steering wheel to prevent it from being turned. The steering wheel lock is also a good visual deterrent to thieves.

### What Attracts a Car Thief?

- Leaving your car unlocked or the windows down.
- Leaving your keys in the car or a spare key hidden in the car.
- Leaving your car unattended.
- Parking in poorly lit places with low visibility.
- Leaving valuables and packages visible in your car.
- Cars without an antitheft device.

### How can I protect my car?

- Don't leave your keys in your car.
- Close your windows and lock your doors whenever you leave your car, regardless of how long you plan to be gone.
- Park in well-lit areas.
- Keep your car in the garage if you have one.
- Park in lots that have attendants.
- Use an antitheft device whenever you leave your car.
- When parking your car, turn your wheels toward the curb to make it more difficult for a thief to "tow" your car.
- Use your emergency brake when you park.
- Engrave your driver's license number preceded by the state letters (OR) or your car's Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) on any removable equipment in your car.
- Replace t-shaped door locks with straight locks so thieves cannot grab them with an implement through a crack in the window.

Information courtesy of Seattle Police Department

# Payment Options for Your Utility Bill

Utility Billing staff are actively working to improve service to our water and sewer customers. This is the first in a series of articles about our services, some of which you may not know about. In coming months, you will see more information on the City Web site and as inserts in your utility statement.

Albany offers a variety of ways to pay utility bills and locations to drop off payments to save a stamp. Here is a brief description of these options:

- **Auto Payment (ACH):** You can authorize the City to automatically withdraw your monthly bill directly from your bank account. Payment will come out of the account on the date that the bill is due and your utility statement will include a notation indicating payment is being made via ACH. The billing system is not currently set up with the bill due on the same date each month; payment may be withdrawn on the 20th one month and the 22nd the next, for example. And payment amounts will vary from month to month. You will receive the statement 15 days before payment is withdrawn so you will know in advance how much will be deducted. We do not have the ability for you to have your bill paid via ACH one month and a different method the next month. To sign up for ACH payments, call or stop by the Utility Billing office at City

Hall for the authorization form, complete it, and return to us with a voided check. It takes approximately 30 days after you sign up for the first payment to be withdrawn.

- **Cash:** You are always welcome to pay your bill with cash! When using cash, you must come to the office at City Hall to pay and receive a receipt.
- **Check/Money Order:** Bring a check or money order to City Hall, drop it in the mail or in one of our drop box locations. Drop boxes are located at Postal Connections in the Fred Meyer complex, Northwest Natural, Albertson's, Safeway, The Shipping Store, T.A. Davies & Company, and on the east side of City Hall by the parking lot. Drop boxes are emptied once a week; if your payment is late, use the City Hall drop box which we check every day.
- **Credit/Debit Cards:** We recently began accepting VISA, Master Cards, and debit cards which have the VISA logo. We accept this type of payment only in our office at City Hall.
- **E-Pay:** You can authorize your bank to pay your utility bill via their online system. You will need to set up the payment each month since your bill

will vary according to how much water you use. When using e-pay, plan ahead. Assume that it will take 7-10 days for us to receive payment. Some banks deposit your payment directly to the City's bank account while others mail us a check. Ask your bank which method they use.

### We also offer some assistance plans:

- **Contract payment:** If your account is past due and service may be shut off, you may be eligible for a contract. This is available only if you contact Utility Billing and enter into a written agreement before service is disconnected.

*Options include:*

**Post-dated check:** We will accept a post-dated check for up to 30 days. The check must be for full balance, not just the past-due portion.

**Partial payment:** You may pay half of the past-due balance and agree to pay the rest in three equal payments over the next three months. You must also pay future bills as they come due.

If you void a contract by not completing an agreement, you may be prohibited from entering into future contracts.

- **Low-Income Assistance:** The City Council authorized a two-year pilot

program, which began in January 2006, offering assistance to low-income residential customers who are senior citizens or disabled. For more information, contact the Community Services Consortium, Two Rivers Mall, 250 Broadalbin Street SW, Suite 2A, or call 928-6335.

- **Snowbirds:** If you are going to be away from home for 30 or more consecutive days and no water will be used, you may call to request a snowbird account. We will turn off your water, you will not be charged for the period you are gone, and will not have to pay a service charge to turn the water on when you return. We need at least 24 business hours' notice before you leave or return to manage a snowbird account.

### And the future holds...

We value our customers and want to protect your personal information. We are developing a policy to ensure that credit card information is secure before we accept credit and debit payments over the phone.

We are also reviewing our software to see if we can provide web access for customers to look up account information and pay bills online.

We will let you know about these options as they become available.

# Preparing for the Next Flood

The 1996 floods were the highest in recent memory, but this area has seen far worse. Without flood control dams, the 1964 flood would have been the highest on record. Many of us were not here to learn the lessons from that flood. If you are in the floodplain, the odds are that someday your property will be damaged. If you don't live in a floodplain, knowing what to do (and not do) in a flood can save your life.

## City Flood Services

Flood maps and flood protection references are available at the Albany Public Library. You can also visit the Community Development Department on the second floor of City Hall. They can help you estimate your home's flood risk, find ways to reduce or prevent flood damage to your property, or select a contractor to repair flood damage. City staff are available to provide specific flood and flood-related data; make site visits to review flood, drainage, and sewer problems; and advise and assist on retrofitting techniques. These services are free. For more information, check the City's Web site [www.cityofalbany.net](http://www.cityofalbany.net).

## Flood Insurance

FEMA has the latest information about flood insurance policies and premiums at <http://www.fema.gov/hazards/flood/>. FEMA's answers to Questions About the National Flood Insurance Program is at <http://www.floodsmart.gov>.

## Property Protection Measures

FEMA's Homeowner's Guide to Retrofitting: Six Ways to Protect Your House from Flooding is on FEMA's Web site at <http://www.fema.gov/hazards/flood/>.

**Property Protection.** Do not dump or throw anything in the ditches,

creeks, or drains. Dumping is a violation of the Albany Municipal Code. Even grass clippings and branches can accumulate and plug channels. If you see dumping or debris in ditches, creeks or drains, contact the Public Works Department at 917-7550.

Always check with the Building Department before you build on, alter, regrade, or fill on your property. A permit may be needed to ensure that projects do not cause problems on other properties. If you see construction work without a building permit posted, contact the Building Department at 917-7553.

You can protect a building from flood damage by regrading the lot or building an earthen berm to keep water away, but this is only effective if flooding is not too deep. Where floodwaters would be deeper, you can raise a house above flood levels for less than \$10,000 if you do some of the work.

**Flood Insurance.** If you don't have flood insurance, talk to your insurance agent. Homeowner's insurance does not cover flood damage and disaster relief funds cover only a small portion of flood damage. Even if you don't carry a mortgage, you should still have flood insurance. For instance, if you're a renter, your landlord is responsible for the structure of your home but not your belongings. You can purchase a separate flood insurance policy because Albany is a member of the National Flood Insurance Program. And those premiums are discounted because

## Did you know?

According to FEMA, about 25% of all flood claims come from outside high-flood-risk areas...

- Floods and flash floods occur in all 50 states,
- Reservoirs, lakes, ponds, rivers and even small streams overflow
- Accumulated snow melts too quickly
- New land development changes natural runoff paths

Albany is a partner in the Community Rating System. At last count, less than half of all homes in the floodplain were covered by flood insurance.

**Flood Warning System.** A warning of potential flooding is conveyed to the community through the Emergency Alert System. Regular programming on radio and television will be interrupted to describe the nature of the flooding, the locations likely to be affected, and what protective action citizens in the area should take. Emergency services personnel will also conduct door-to-door

notification when flooding is imminent. You should heed these warnings and take appropriate action to safeguard your life and property.

## Protect Property Before the Flood.

Take the following precautions now to protect your property and loved ones in the event of a flood.

- Take photos of important possessions and store them away from danger. The pictures will be of help should you need to file a flood insurance claim.
- Store important documents and irreplaceable items where they are unlikely to be damaged in a flood.
- Have a licensed electrician raise electrical components, such as switches and circuit breakers, above your home's projected flood elevation. This is the height floodwater will likely reach in your home as determined from a local flood elevation map.
- Have a licensed plumber install backflow valves or plugs to prevent floodwaters

from entering your drains, toilets and other sewer connections.

## Flood Safety

**Do not walk through flowing water:** Drowning is the number one cause of flood deaths, mostly during flash floods. Currents can be deceptive; six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet. If you walk in standing water, use a pole or stick to ensure that the ground is still there.

**Do not drive through a flooded area:** More people drown in their cars than anywhere else. Don't drive around road barriers; the road or bridge may be washed out.

**Stay away from power lines and electrical wires:** The number two flood killer after drowning is electrocution. Electrical current can travel through water. Report downed power lines to Pacific Power, Consumers Power, or the Linn County Sheriff's Office.

**Shut off gas and electricity and move valuable contents upstairs:** Be prepared in advance with a detailed checklist because warning of an impending flood may provide little time for preparation prior to evacuation.

**Look out for animals, especially snakes:** Small animals that have been flooded out of their homes may seek shelter in yours. Use a pole or stick to poke and turn things over and scare away small animals.

**Look before you step:** After a flood, the ground and floors are covered with debris including broken bottles and nails. Floors and stairs that have been covered with mud can be very slippery.

**Be alert for gas leaks:** Use a flashlight to inspect for damage. Don't smoke or use candles, lanterns or open flames unless you know that the gas has been turned off and the area has been ventilated.

For more information go to [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov)

## Share Your Library with Friends; Donate Used Books for October Sale

Friends of the Albany Public Library are still looking for new or used books for their major annual fund-raiser: the Friends Book Sale, scheduled October 19-21, 2006, in the Willamette Conference Center at the Linn County Fair & Expo Center.

The theme for this year's sale is "Books: World's Best Treasure."

The Friends use money from the annual sale to provide the library with programs like the Summer Reading Program and equipment and materials for other special projects and needs. As Albany Public Library prepares to move into a new building more than twice the size of the existing Main branch, the Library's needs are growing as well.

The book sale is increasingly popular. For the last few years, the Friends have had more books donated than they've had room to display all at once and enough customers to get the attention of the Fire Marshal. The move to the Fair &



## The Albany Public Library is now a wireless hotspot.

Patrons and visitors with properly configured laptops should be able to make a wireless connection within the Library. In addition to having access to the Internet, patrons will have access to the Library's databases, book resources, and information professionals.

Expo Center will provide enough room to display the books and make the Fire Marshal happy.

But, book donations have been lagging behind what they usually are by this time of year; and with the move to the Expo Center, the Friends have a lot more room to display items for sale.

If you have books, new or used, that you want to donate, drop them off at the Downtown Carnegie Library, 302 Ferry Street SW. Donations are tax-deductible, and tax forms are available at both library branches.

The book sale will be open from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Thursday and Friday, October 19 and 20; and 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday, October 21.

For further information about donations, call 917-7580 or 917-7585.