

Dyer ...from Page 1A

have to find them something to do, somewhere to go, until Monday.”

Treating the eclipse event like a winter storm makes a lot of sense – instead of snow making it harder for people to get around, it’ll be traffic.

Perhaps Dyer’s biggest concern is the people who will inevitably park on the side of the road.

“I’m concerned about that for two reasons,” said Dyer, who is also the county fire chief and 911 director. “No. 1, it’s not really a safe thing to be parking on the side of the road and trying to get out of your car, having people moving around the highway. When you’re that close to the road, it’s dangerous.

“The other big problem that I have is people who won’t get completely off the road ... and their car doesn’t even have to be sticking out in the road, it’s just got to be close, and people will slow down or stop, or it creates a bottleneck, and that’s going to create more

traffic hazards.”

Increased traffic hazards have the potential to impede the flow of emergency vehicles, and though Chief Dyer said that emergency personnel will respond in a prioritized manner to all 911 calls, people should expect a delayed emergency response the day of the eclipse, and perhaps over the weekend if the eclipse influx starts early.

“The fire department needs to get around, the sheriff’s office needs to get around, the ambulance service needs to get around,” said Chief Dyer. “Utility services, the EMC, if there are issues, they need to be able to move around, so the traffic is a huge issue.”

Continued Chief Dyer: “If traffic is bad or we get a huge call volume – ambulance, fire, sheriff’s office and police may have a delayed response on calls.”

Trespassing may be an issue as visitors make their way into residential areas to find places to stop and view the eclipse, and residents are urged to be patient with out-of-towners here to see the big show.

Another issue? People who decide to go hiking the day of the eclipse – a wilderness rescue would stretch resources even thinner.

Lt. Daren Osborn of the Union County Sheriff’s Office advises everyone to get all their medications, food, water and other supplies, including filling cars with gas, before the eclipse traffic hits this weekend.

“The day of the eclipse, we’re doubling all patrols, all deputies will be on shift that day,” said Lt. Osborn. “Criminal Investigations, Narcotics, Patrol – everybody will be here in uniform, and we will be on patrol that day.

“We’ve got to make sure that the citizens are protected, as well as the people who are coming to the area.”

UCSO Capt. Doug Loyd, who is over Patrol, added that the sheriff’s office will be working staff and a half over the eclipse weekend.

“My advice for the community and for the people during this is to remain calm,” said Capt. Loyd. “Do business as normal, and if you do see something that seems out of the norm, definitely call 911.”

And while Chief Dyer says 911 will be ready to field any and all emergency calls, he is asking people to take advantage of the non-emergency number when applicable, at (706) 439-6038.

“If people have concerns or questions that they feel are not an emergency but they want to notify somebody, they need to use the non-emergency number,” said Dyer.

It is possible for local cell towers to become overwhelmed with so many people in town, but local first responders don’t expect a

communications blackout, and Chief Dyer asks that everyone check out ready.gov for information on how to craft family emergency communication plans.

Regardless, first responders will still be able to utilize radios to communicate with one another, and as far as additional preparations, the response has been comprehensive.

“We’re strategically placing people throughout the county so that if there is an issue or an area that has a problem, we’re going to have someone in that area to be able to respond to it,” said Dyer, noting additional firefighting/first responder presence at Ivy Log, Jones Creek, Choestoe and the main Fire Station No. 1 on Shoe Factory Road.

On the day of, both before and after the eclipse, Dyer and other first responders will be manning the EMA’s Emergency Operations Center inside Station 1.

The 911 Dispatch Center will have an extra dispatcher on hand the day of the eclipse.

Union County Government has issued a statement that all administrative offices will be closing at noon on Aug. 21.

“These office closings include the Union County Courthouse, Building Inspections, Environmental Health, Union County Health Department, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service,” according to the release. “Please see the Union County website, www.unioncountygov.com, for up to date information on office closings as Eclipse Day approaches.”

The Transfer Station should be open the day of the eclipse, though Transportation, the Union County Library and the UGA Extension Office will be closed all day.

Union County Schools will be closed the day of the eclipse.

The Blairsville Police Department will have all officers working the day of the eclipse, and Blairsville City Hall will hold normal operating hours.

Union General Hospital will have extra emergency staff on location, plus another emergency vehicle and extra staff from the ambulance service the day of the eclipse. Also, the hospital’s clinics at Walmart and in Young Harris will be open for patients with less serious problems.

All local hotels, motels and cabins have been booked, and residents who wish to avoid the eclipse hustle and bustle should plan to stay inside the weekend of the eclipse and on Aug. 21.

Union County EMA will meet one more time with area first responders on Thursday, Aug. 17, ahead of the eclipse.

“Be aware, be patient and be careful,” said Chief Dyer, looking ahead to the eclipse weekend and actual event.

Dockery ...from Page 1A

crime, according to the sheriff’s office.

At the time of his 2013 arrest, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said: “Our investigators seized \$8,630 in cash, a 2000 Toyota pickup, 68 firearms, and a double-wide trailer and two acres of land. As I’ve said before, our goal is to make drug trafficking a very undesirable business in Union County.”

Fast forward to Aug. 8, 2017, when UCSO Deputy Jerrit Pack pulled over a vehicle around 9:30 a.m. near the intersection of US 129 and Ivy Log Road.

Deputy Pack stopped the vehicle because he had noticed that neither the driver nor the passenger of the vehicle were wearing seatbelts, and Dockery

happened to be the passenger of that vehicle, according to the sheriff’s office.

UCSO Investigators determined at the scene that Dockery was in possession of two firearms inside the vehicle, according to the sheriff’s office, and that happens to be a legal no-no for convicted felons.

The investigators then escorted Dockery to his home, and they searched the property after obtaining warrants. There, they found more firearms, which contributed to Dockery’s six felony counts of illegal weapons possession.

As always, Sheriff Mason would like to thank his deputies and investigators for their hard work keeping crime off the streets of Union County.

County Mounties Solarfest and Horse De-spooking Clinic Fundraiser

The County Mounties, a non-profit 501(c)3 service horse organization in the Southeast, is having a weekend Solarfest fundraiser August 18 – 21 at the County Mounties arena in Hayesville, NC. Our location is in the path of totality for the eclipse. There will be camping space for tents, RVs and horse trailers. Anyone who wants to camp and watch the eclipse can rent a space. Riders who are interested in improving their relationship with their horse can register for a Satur-

day trail ride and the Sunday de-spooking/sensory training clinic. Monday is the viewing event with a luncheon and eclipse glasses provided with advanced reservation. For information and reservations contact Lawrence Beal, Director of County Mounties at 828-361-4669 or email w-horse@yahoo.com and Paula Palmer at 828-736-6422 or email paphayesville@gmail.com

All details and costs are on Facebook: County Mounties Mounted Patrol Unit.