

Worker's killer returning to state hospital

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A man charged with killing a mental health worker in May pleaded guilty except for insanity Tuesday and is expected to be sent to the Oregon State Hospital.

Brent Redd, 31, stabbed Jennifer Warren to death when she delivered medicine to his apartment in St. Helens on May 20, 2012.

Redd pleaded guilty except for insanity in 2007 after he was accused of trying to kill his mother in 2005.

He was sent to the Oregon State Hospital for three years, until the Psychiatric Security Review Board deemed him eligible for release and sent him to Columbia Community Mental Health in 2010, a community mental health program in St. Helens. He was transferred from restrictive 24-hour supervision to his own duplex in 2011.

Redd appeared in court Tuesday with a shaved head and long beard. He cried throughout the 20-minute hearing. Warren's mother, Theresa Armstrong, wept and



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Theresa Armstrong pauses as she speaks about her daughter, Jennifer Warren, during the sentencing hearing for Brent Redd in St. Helens.

then addressed Redd.

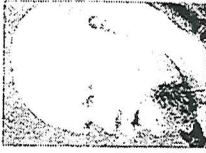
"There is a hole in my heart," she said, and added,

"May God have mercy on your soul."

Redd's attorney, Patrick



Read more about Brent Redd (right) at ORne.ws/brent-redd



Sweeney, responded, "Mr. Redd conveys his sympathy and remorse."

Redd suffers from psychosis as a result of schizophrenia. He has been evaluated four times by state psychiatrists, most recently in January. They found that Redd either couldn't understand that his behavior was criminal or was unable to control his actions.

Under the terms of the sentence imposed Tuesday by Judge Steven Reed, the state Psychiatric Security Review Board can keep Redd in the hospital for the rest of his life.

Under the terms of Redd's original 2007 conviction for attempted murder of his mother, he was sentenced to up to 20 years under the supervision of the Psychiatric Security Review Board.

Oregon Workers' Compensation Fatality Data

Year	Workers' compensation covered employment	Fatal claims ¹	PTD deaths (estimate) ²
1998	1,576,100	52	188
1999	1,602,700	47	157
2000	1,627,600	45	118
2001	1,616,400	34	141
2002	1,596,100	52	162
2003	1,585,800	41	113
2004	1,630,500	45	108
2005	1,677,500	31	100
2006	1,734,400	37	86
2007	1,762,700	35	66
2008	1,746,200	45	69
2009	1,637,400	31	75
2010	1,623,300	17	95
2011	1,638,700	28	83

¹Data for fatal claims does not include deaths of workers not subject to the Oregon workers' compensation law, such as self-employed workers, workers employed by out-of-state employers, City of Portland police and fire employees, and federal employees.

²Workers with permanent total disability (PTD) claims are eligible for fatality benefits upon their death. This number is an estimate of PTD claimants who die in a calendar year.

Average 36 deaths per year since 2001.

Not all the story updates are upbeat

The good news? The barricades are finally coming down at Portland International Airport. Belatedly, if not begrudgingly, the Port of Portland has found room for a USO Center to welcome military personnel and their families to town.

In the two years that retired Army Col. Joe Williams led a lonely campaign for that welcome lounge — a fixture at 41 other U.S. airports — he was told time and again that



STEVE DUIN

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the Port couldn't find room in the "limited" space available at PDX. Williams sought reinforcements — "Being a committee of one was a poor decision on my part," he concedes — and mounted a new offensive.

He enlisted retired Navy Cmdr. Donald Leingang, executive director of USO Northwest. He reached out to the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs and the governor's office.

And, lo and behold, the Port

stumbled upon an old conference room that was being used for storage on the airport mezzanine.

Williams is thrilled. Negotiations are continuing. Williams estimates he may need to raise \$250,000 to renovate and furnish the room, but he is optimistic that the PDX welcome center will open by early summer.

"Maybe July 4," Williams says. "Wouldn't that be something?"

The bad news: Last May, Jennifer Warren, who worked for Columbia County Mental Health, dropped by the St. Helens duplex of Brent K.

Redd Jr. to deliver anti-psychotic meds.

Originally committed to Oregon State Hospital when he tried to kill his mother in 2007, Redd was granted conditional release by the Psychiatric Security Review Board in 2010. He lived with minimal supervision and a curfew, but his therapy seemed to be going well.

Until that Sunday morning, when Redd stabbed Warren to death.

On Feb. 12, Redd pleaded guilty except for insanity to the murder. He was placed, once again, under the review board's care.

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And that board is immune from a wrongful death claim by Warren's 22-year-old daughter, Jessica, because her mother was covered by workers' comp.

"It blows me away," said Michael Sahagian, attorney for Jennifer Warren's estate, "when there's no recourse against these government bodies."

Workers' comp, of course, is a compromise, one in which workers generally accept no-fault insurance for work-related injuries while giving up the right to sue for extensive damages.

In negotiating that trade-off, the Legislature apparently decided that public agencies deserved a piece of the immunity deal.

The statute is clear: "Every public body and its officers ... are immune from liability for any claim for injury to, or death of, any person covered by workers' compensation law."

Look at it this way: If Redd had turned the kitchen knife on two people last May, Warren and the guy mowing the duplex lawn, only the family of the guy on the John Deere could file suit against the board that decided Redd was no threat to the public.

"If PSRB or any government body makes a decision that can be shown is negligent, they're on the hook," Sahagian argues. "When people are released to their custody, they have an obligation to protect the public. They have to decide when it's safe to let them out.

"That may come down to a jury question. But because of that immunity, we can't even get to a jury."

In Warren's case, Sahagian said, workers' comp paid the estate \$16,000, much of which disappeared into funeral expenses.

Her daughter has no further recourse. Whatever remorse the Psychiatric Security Review Board is dealing with, it doesn't have to worry about financial liability.

And only the Legislature can decide if this brand of shoehorned immunity is truly warranted in wrongful-death cases.

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