



Contact Rebecca Squires
Telephone (208) 745-0868
Cell (208)589-8811
Email rsquires@co.jefferson.id.us
Website www.co.jefferson.id.us

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INSIDER VIEWPOINT: AN ECLIPSE IS COMING AND IT'S TIME TO SHINE!

RIGBY, ID, November 4, 2016 – It's going to get dark in Jefferson County, and thousands will be here to see it happen. A total solar eclipse – the kind where the sun is completely obscured and you can view the majestic corona with the naked eye – only happens in a given area once every 400 years or so. The event is so rare that people flock to see it happen. For folks in Jefferson and part of Clark Counties, you can see it from your own home August 21, 2017.

Unless you live under a rock, you probably already knew all that. But here's the interesting part: This event is an unprecedented opportunity for the world to see what our community is all about. Our sunny skies are a big factor in people deciding that East Idaho is the place to be to view what astronomers call "Totality." You can't see an eclipse if it's cloudy, and you can't experience Totality outside the 80-mile shadow that will cross our region.

It has been reported by campground and hotel owners that most lodging is already booked for the days surrounding the eclipse, and more requests come in daily. Folks are coming from Arizona, California, Texas, Utah, and countries across the world to chase the sun and share the moment with us.

"Eclipse Chasers" are real, and they are coming. Most will be here for the two or three days before the eclipse. And when they get here, they need places to sleep, food to eat, and souvenirs to remember us by. Are you ready?

For government leaders, readiness means reviewing local ordinances for the establishment of temporary campgrounds and viewing venues. It means planning emergency response, understanding that fire, EMS and law enforcement will be stretched thin across the region. It means understanding and planning for alternative transportation routes as heavy traffic brings travel to a crawl.

For businesses leaders, readiness means having the inventory, services, and visibility to provide the goods and services eclipse chasers (and locals) need to be safe and comfortable. Memorabilia – like posters, safety glasses and t-shirts - will be in high demand. The eclipse ends at lunchtime. Where will they eat?

For residents, churches, schools and other organizations, how will the eclipse affect you? Maybe you'll rent out room in your home or camp space in your yard (check local restrictions!). Maybe you will design the hottest poster or bumper sticker out there. Maybe, your scout troop or marching band will charge for parking and create the world's best viewing venue. The sky is literally the limit on what you might do!

As a community, this is our chance to really shine! A community meeting will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday, November 17 at the Jefferson Joint School District 251 District Office, 3850 East 300 North, Rigby. We will discuss how the eclipse will impact our area and ways to be involved. We will also be sharing information on how to advertise your eclipse event or viewing venue on our community websites. Please come, gain a little knowledge, and share your ideas. Our future has never been so bright!

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If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Rebecca Squires at (208) 745-0868 or email at rsquires@co.jefferson.id.us.