

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, August 11, 2020.

Jefferson County reported one new case of COVID-19 this week, bringing the county wide total to 55. The new case was a female under 20 years of age and originated from an out-of-county exposure. Currently of 5,388 tests administered 5,290 have turned up negative. The ratio of positive tests has fallen a tenth of a point, to 1%. These tests of course do not reflect those who are untested or may be asymptomatic.

Forty three people are awaiting test results.

As the United States Census Bureau moved up the reporting deadline one month, Jefferson County is scrambling to gather an accurate count to its citizens.

According to a press release, the County has reported a 63.8% response, besting 2010's number of 55.7%. Response ranges from 75.2% in Port Townsend to 31.4% in Brinnon and the West End. All areas have exceeded their 2010 count.

If 63% is an acceptable range for voter participation, it's still low with regard to the census. So the county is contacting those who did not respond to gather their data in time for the final count on September 30, only six weeks away.

According to 2020 Census-Jefferson Counts Project Director Jeannie McMacken, the county seeks to reach the homeless and underserved to encourage their participation. For the next two Wednesdays a census representative will be at the Brinnon Food Bank to answer questions and provide assistance. While the county will attempt to proactively contact non respondents you don't have to wait for their call. To complete the Census, go to www.2020census.gov or call 844-330-2020 by September 30.

Anyone contacted by a Census official should respond, but with care. All census employees will have a valid U.S. Government photo ID that contains a Department of Commerce watermark. They will have a Census bag or briefcase and a tablet or mobile phone. Census workers will never ask for credit card or bank account information or tell you that your answers will determine your eligibility for government benefits or stimulus packages.

After last week's virtual county fair another summer event is happening in place. The eighth annual All County Picnic, designed to supply emergency preparedness training is happening this Sunday in your own back yard.

In conjunction with the "Picnic in Place" event, Department of Emergency Management Director Willie Bence and other local public safety and Emergency Operations Center staff will host an online presentation at 5pm on Sunday, August 16.

Community members can sign up to log in and hear these leaders discuss the local response to COVID-19 , as well as lessons learned and key factors to our success moving forward. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions to presenters, and the presentation will conclude with an open discussion about ways to continue to build resiliency and new ways to build community under the "new normal" of COVID-19 .

COVID-19 has demanded all of our attention this summer. But that doesn't decrease the inevitability of an earthquake or tsunami.

Fire prevention is always a huge concern in the summertime, but has become more acute this summer. Commissioner of Public Lands Hillary Franz has urged people to be especially careful in the shadow of COVID-19. The reminder originates from an incident over the weekend where an asymptomatic DNR firefighter who had been serving at a fire camp tested positive for COVID-19.

Firefighters don't have the ability to social distance as they work in close contact with each other. That means the stakes are high: a widespread outbreak among our firefighters would impede our ability to keep Washingtonians safe.

So the obvious solution is to prevent the fires to begin with, so the firefighters avoid the risk...as if we need another reason to act responsibly.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at 5pm PM Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through news@kptz.org.

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.