

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, December 8, 2020.

The Jefferson County Health Department reported seven new cases of COVID-19 on Monday, for a total of 183. Thirty nine people are awaiting test results. This is as we receive a constant stream of good news/bad news. The vaccine is in the wings, but things will get worse before they get better.

As for the COVID-19 vaccines, Jefferson County Health officer Dr. Tom Locke told the county commissioners on Monday that no one will be denied immunization based on ability to pay. Local hospitals can also meet the minus eighty degree storage requirement.

So when it arrives, probably in the spring or summer, there will be no reason to not get vaccinated. That is, unless you don't like being told what to do.

These increased numbers could continue, as we will soon see the results of the expected Thanksgiving holiday surge. Locke said that health workers are preparing for what could become a greater surge, resulting from the Christmas holiday. He said that a lot of people who were willing to forego family gatherings for Thanksgiving may not be willing to do so for the Christmas holidays.

There are several ways to enjoy the holiday season without traveling. Teleconferencing contact can be unrewarding but it is a safe option. Package delivery services can get the presents there on time, and you can see little Andy's face on Zoom as he opens his package. There is nothing about the holidays that can't be enjoyed in some form, especially when you look at it as an investment in the future. Stay isolated this year, so next year can happen.

But people aren't cooperating, most likely because they don't like being told what to do, just on principle. We are also seeing several Facebook notices about restaurants that are offering indoor dining, in violation of the governor's order.

One of the only ways to combat pandemic fatigue is to go outdoors, and there are quite a few hiking options in Jefferson County. For this, Locke said that it is still imperative to maintain that 6-foot distance between you and others. He said that people should be wearing a mask, all the time when you're indoors and either not alone or not with family. While outdoors, stay at least six feet away if either of you are not masked up.

Most people don't like wearing a mask while hiking, and have worked out an elaborate trail etiquette. The mask is around their neck, to be slipped on when another hiker comes in view. Some of us make a show of this, to alert the other hiker. Anecdotally, most people on the local trails are aware of masks and follow the rules but some do not. If you cross someone without a mask, on their face or around their neck, you don't have to engage them but you shouldn't let them pet your dog either.

On the lighter side, the Jefferson County Historical Society is collecting postcards for a "Dear 2020" exhibit that would eventually portray how people feel about this remarkable year.

The idea came out of a staff brainstorm about how we might capture community memories from this strange, strange, strange year, according to museum spokesperson Tara McCauley. The postcards will be accepted until the end of January.

The museum is now closed, but it has installed a rack outside of its building at 540 Water Street that holds pre-addressed, stamped cards where you can add your comments. The idea is to create a lasting community record of this historic time, according to a press release.

The material gathered could be posted on social media or used as an exhibit. There are no guidelines, although the museum may not be able to publicly share notes with more colorful language. So you should probably not say any words that would send you to detention or contribute to the swear jar, under normal circumstances.

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

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.