

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

Jefferson County now has reported 190 cases of COVID-19, an increase of 16 cases in the past week. These numbers are as of Thursday morning, and many times the cases we report on the noon news have increased by the end of the day. For the latest numbers, including gender breakdown and cumulative percentages, visit the Jefferson County Public Health website (<https://jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1466/Case-Information>) or the Jefferson County Government Facebook page. Also as of Thursday morning, 61 people are awaiting results.

Jefferson Healthcare reported this week that the hospital is confirmed to receive an early shipment distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine from Pfizer and Moderna.

The first distribution, which will occur after the FDA issues its approval, will be administered to high-risk healthcare workers, high-risk first responders, assisted-living staff, and home healthcare workers as well as high-risk public health employees. This distribution will represent the first dose of a 2-dose vaccine. The second dose, to complete the series in 21-28 days, is anticipated in a follow up delivery. Jefferson Healthcare staff is preparing to begin vaccinating this population immediately after clearance is issued.

Jefferson Healthcare acquired an ultra-low temperature freezer in anticipation of the Pfizer vaccine which needs ultra-low storage, but is also prepared to accept and distribute the Moderna vaccine. The hospital expects additional information including federal and state parameters around vaccine distribution to be made available in the next few days, at which time it will provide additional information about logistics and prioritization.

You may hear some loud noises and shooting today, but it is not an indicator of any political unrest. Naval Magazine Indian Island installation personnel will hold a training exercise with activities including the use of blank ammunition, loud sirens, and bright blue flashing lights at the Main Gate entrance. Residents in nearby communities may experience increased noise levels and associated activity.

This from our silver linings desk: Being in jail is generally not a good thing, but if you are arrested in Jefferson County you probably will stay safe from COVID-19 during your incarceration.

While the pandemic has altered operations in terms of bookings, court appearances, and personal and professional visitation at county jails and correctional facilities, there have been no reported cases of the virus for the inmates of the Jefferson County Jail. Sheriff Joe Nole told the Jefferson County News Facebook page that no positives have been recorded for deputies, corrections staff or inmates, although seven staff members were placed on quarantine early in the pandemic. None tested positive.

As of earlier this week, 19 percent of Washingtonians – more than 1 million – have signed up for the WANotify exposure notification technology. This anonymous tracking tool uses smartphones to help stop the spread of COVID-19. When voluntarily activated, phones with WANotify use bluetooth technology to exchange random

codes with phones of other nearby users without revealing their identity or location. Users who test positive for the virus can enter a verification code provided by public health so those who have been near them within the last 14 days can be anonymously alerted and take appropriate action.

The service is free and enabled on iPhones and Android models. Users can opt out at any time. For more information go to <https://doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19/WANotify>.

And while voter fraud is not really a thing voter suppression is a serious issue, according to our local congressman, Derek Kilmer.

In a press release, Kilmer said that purging voter rolls, denying people access to their ballots, forcing voters to wait in long lines, requiring IDs, and other nefarious and intentional restrictions have all created barriers to the ballot box.

The main perpetrator, according to Kilmer, is soon-to-be-former president Donald Trump and his supporters, saying that since Election Day, Donald Trump has called for hundreds and thousands of mail-in ballots to be thrown out. His request would have disenfranchised millions of Black voters in Philadelphia, Atlanta, Milwaukee and Detroit – and thankfully, his baseless claims of voter fraud have been repeatedly shot down in court.

To prevent this from happening again, Kilmer has sponsored the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, and is seeking public support for the bill.

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.