

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, January 5, 2021.

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Jefferson County experienced an apparent post Christmas surge in COVID-19 cases, reporting 13 new cases of the virus on Monday. The total is now 233, with 52 people awaiting results.

Jefferson County has received the Pfizer vaccination, with 970 doses administered so far. According to County Health Officer Dr. Tom Locke 980 doses are on hand waiting for confirmation that we can get a second shipment, with the intention to apply the vaccine's second dose later this month.

On Monday, Dr. Locke told the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners of his concern about the post-holiday surge, saying they result from holiday travel and get-togethers that violated guidelines. Despite this increase in numbers he said the anticipated surge is not expected to peak until mid-month and anyone who has travelled out of state should quarantine for two full weeks and get tested if they detect any symptoms.

Jefferson Healthcare has been making preparations for full-scale vaccinations, setting the stage for a four-lane drive through a vaccination facility behind the Manresa Castle next to the hospital which will be open seven days a week.

The State Health Department will roll out PhaseFinder tomorrow, an online portal that determines vaccine eligibility and to book appointments for those qualifying. People will be encouraged to go online and input information on age and occupation to determine when they can get their vaccination. The website has a complicated direct link, so you can find it by searching for Washington Department of Health Covid Eligibility.

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City utility rates increased on January 1, and will be reflected in the January 31 billing. The average fixed rate residential customer will see a three percent increase over last year, from \$113 to \$117. The monthly water base rate increases from \$20.80 to \$21.42. Water usage charges increase from \$2.94 per 1,000 gallons used to \$3.03 per 1,000 gallons used. The water capital surcharge remains \$22.00 to fund ongoing capital improvement projects. The monthly sewer base and stormwater rates will also increase, with rates varying for each class of water customer and water meter size. The City anticipates additional utility rate and surcharge increases over the next several years to fully fund utility requirements, according to the city's monthly newsletter.

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Heavy rains have caused an excess of standing water on our local roads, endangering drivers and preventing excursions to COSTCO. The Jefferson County Department of Works has asked the public to report excessive water on county roads, mudslides and blocked culverts by calling 360-385-0890 or through the department's web site. Crews currently are working to clear drainage issues and several small slides as they are reported.

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Rough weather also threatens our transportation flexibility, as these conditions make the operation of the Port Townsend to Coupeville Ferry less than sure thing. Those wishing to travel to and from Whidbey Island need to stay connected to the Washington State Ferry web site for the latest cancellations. No-show fees will be waived for those affected by the disruption.

At least the bad weather decreases the frustration about being locked up in the house.

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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](mailto:news@kptz.org).

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.