

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Thursday, February 18, 2021.

We are seeing an incremental increase in Jefferson County's COVID-19 numbers, with two new cases reported on both Tuesday and Wednesday. The total number is now 330, with seven active cases in isolation and 38 people awaiting test results.

Jefferson Healthcare reopened its drive-through immunization clinic yesterday, administering first doses of Pfizer vaccine that it received on Tuesday. The hospital was one of the few in the state to receive new doses this week, according to its website. Those over 65 who want to receive the vaccine can register on the hospital's website (<https://jeffersonhealthcare.org/covid-19-vaccine/>) and will receive an email notification when they are qualified to receive the vaccine and there is an available dose. At that time they will have 48 hours to respond, or someone else will get the slot. If there is no response to the invitation, the recipient's name will go back on the list, and a new link will be emailed when the next vaccine shipment is received. The age restriction is a hard and fast rule. So right now, if your birthday is after February 18, 1956 the system will not accept your entry.

According to its website the hospital is also reaching out to age-eligible individuals who are medically frail and/or more vulnerable to COVID-19 due to race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic circumstance. Each vaccine shipment has a portion set aside to make sure everyone in our community has fair access to vaccination. This outreach will be accomplished with support from community organizations as well as Jefferson Healthcare care navigators and case managers who have relationships with many of these patients. At present, 7,000 people have signed up to be vaccinated through Jefferson Healthcare, according to county health officer Dr. Tom Locke.

During his weekly briefing to the county commissioners, Locke said Jefferson County has one of the lowest number of COVID-19 cases in Washington State with, on average, one case per day and a positivity rate at 3.4 percent. These numbers caused our upgrade to phase 2, which is now in effect. Locke said the County is limited only by vaccination supply at this point. But Locke reassured the Commissioners, saying that increased vaccine supplies are on the way, with the supply increasing each month. Locke predicted that the supply will open up in April or May, at which time vaccines will be available to anyone who wants them. This, as we know from experience, is a moving target based on several things that are beyond our control. What is in our control is the continued practice of wearing masks and social distancing. I'm not going to explain that again.

Selected forests in Port Townsend and the Cape George area will be closed for the next month or so for forest health improvement, according to the county. The Larry Scott Trailhead County Park will be closed for forest thinning, but the trail and parking lot will remain open. Areas to be closed during harvest will be marked with signs and flagging from Cape George Rd, west to Sand Rd, and south to the Larry Scott Trailhead. Selected forests in the County Gravel Pit area on Cape George Road also will be closed temporarily for forest health improvement thinning harvests. All work will be within county property boundaries.

This project is part of Jefferson County's Sustainable Forest Management Program. According to Mallory Weinheimer of Chickadee Forestry, who is supervising the effort, these forests are overstocked and lack

diversity in tree species and ages, which increases risk of fire, disease, and mortality in the forest. The purpose of this project is to decrease risk of fire, remove the most unhealthy trees, and increase spacing between trees to give them and the forest understory plants more access to sunlight and nutrients. The healthiest, most diverse trees will be left to continue to grow in a more natural environment, Weinheimer said. The properties are expected to be closed for about a month.

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.