

The Dalles Chronicle

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Oregon health authorities prepare

By Les Zaitz
 Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM—Health authorities are preparing Oregon's 62 hospitals for an expected surge in patients infected with the novel coronavirus, encouraging a stop to elective surgery, arranging for additional patient beds, and shifting some emergency care to medical clinics and doctors' practices.

The challenge is clear. Oregon officials have estimated that if they can't slow the spread of COVID-19, the state could have 75,000 infected residents by the middle of May. Based on China's experience, medical experts calculate that about 80 percent would face mild to moderate conditions that might not need intense medical care.

But that could leave Oregon with

14,000 people with severe to critical symptoms, a number that would overwhelm the state's hospital capacity.

Oregon hospitals have about 6,600 hospital beds and, based on 2018 data, six out of 10 are occupied by patients at any one time. At that time, Oregon hospitals had 1,059 intensive care beds, with about half of those in the Portland area.

The reality of those numbers has state and hospital officials adapting their crisis plans, refined after the 2009 outbreak of H1N1, commonly known as the swine flu, according to Dr. Richard Leman, chief medical officer with the Oregon Health Authority's Health Security Preparedness and Response unit.

Leman said in a Sunday interview with the *Oregon Capital Bureau* that every Oregonian now has a role in containing the virus. He said

the advice isn't new—but has to be heeded. That includes washing hands, covering coughs and cleaning with alcohol-based sanitizers that can kill the virus. He said sick people simply have to stay home.

He said health authorities are working to "expand the capacity within hospitals, of what we can do, how many people we can take care of, how we take care of people even if they are very sick."

Leman said some hospitals have extra beds but they are limited by regulations in how many they can use at any one time. He said Oregon is expecting a ruling that would allow hospitals to "expand the number of beds—if they have the staff."

While rural hospitals—and half of Oregon's qualify as such—are farther from support and face greater challenges to maintain staffing, the federal government has relaxed

rules so they can care for more patients.

Leman said state officials "are looking very seriously" at establishing "alternate care sites" to treat those who are too sick to be at home but don't need hospital-level care. This would be for people such as those who have trouble breathing—a symptom of COVID-19—who can be treated outside a hospital setting for that "extra bit of help" recovering.

Leman said Oregon's doctors, physician's assistants and other medical professionals will be expected to care for more people who normally would be sent to a hospital emergency room for deep cuts or broken bones. "We're asking them to step up," Leman said. "There are a lot of well-trained people. They can do a lot."

That diversion would help spare

hospitals and leave more resources for those infected with COVID-19 who need hospitalization.

He noted that most people who are infected with the disease are expected to have mild symptoms.

Another challenge is getting hospitals and other medical providers the supplies they need. He said hospitals are reporting they have what they need—for the moment.

Gov. Kate Brown last week asked for immediate supplies from federal caches, but learned Friday the state was getting only a portion of what it requested. Federal officials are doling out supplies based on a state's percentage of the national population, according to an email issued Friday by a federal official with the U.S. Health and Human Services Department. "We are not getting the equipment we need," Brown told reporters Friday.



Cumbia artist Federico Villa practicing his keyboards in his home studio in The Dalles Jan. 21. Villa is currently creating an album for release later this year. Gabriel Bravo photo

Loss of arm can't silence artist

Love of cumbia inspires The Dalles keyboardist

By Gabriel Bravo
 The Dalles Chronicle

SINCE 1986 FEDERICO VILLA has been playing cumbia with his keyboard in various on-and-off groups across Oregon, The Gorge, Washington and California. Gigs that Villa has performed in are weddings, quinceañera, night-clubs and more notable events like Cherry Festival and Rhythms of The Dalles Dance Festival.

Villa's love of cumbia did not change in 2015 when he lost his arm in an agricultural accident. The keys player's right arm, from his elbow down, is missing.

"Well, I worked in the peach orchards in Maryhill as a foreman," Villa said. "My boss started giving me jobs that weren't part of my position. One day, the machine that conveys the peaches broke and I went to fix it."

That same machine previously had problems and had broken down multiple times, Villa said. Occasionally it would start without warning.

"I told my boss multiple times, 'That machine's bad. That needs to be fixed,'" Villa said. "But like always, they didn't listen."

As Villa was fixing the conveyor belt roller, the machine turned on and nearly tore off his arm. Due to the severity of his injury, Villa had his arm amputated in a Portland hospital.

"I have a friend who has a small studio. I go to his house and lay down the vocals."

Federico Villa
 Keyboardist

After the incident Villa fell into depression.

"That affected me a lot. But I began visiting a psychiatrist and they helped me out a bunch," Villa said. "I then began attending physical therapy and I was encouraged to return to music."

His physical therapists, who coincidentally are musicians themselves, told him not to give up. Just like you learned how to use your right hand, you'll do the same with the left, Villa's therapist told him.

"They taught me hand exercises and they told me, 'I want to see you play one day,'" Villa said. "Over time I saw that it was possible and began playing bit by bit and began making an effort. But this was around two or three years after the accident. To be honest, I'm not saying I play the same, but as best I can."

With practice, patience and perseverance, Villa began doing small gigs in the area and eventually booked a performance at Cherry Festival last year. One of Villa's plans is to release a CD later this year.

"I recorded eight songs this past year. This year I want to release another album," Villa said. "I'm producing them right now, putting the finishing touches in them and chugging along. My idea is to put out a CD and see the response it gets. If it's well received, I'd like to

form another group. This is like a test run. If it's successful, then great. But if not there's no problem. I'll still continue playing as a hobby."

Writing, editing and producing are done in Villa's house in his makeshift studio. Production began in November but sometimes songs don't come out as expected, Villa said. Once tracks are completed singing is then added.

"I have a friend who has a small studio," Villa said. "I then go to his house and lay down the vocals."

Before Villa's accident, he preferred filling every space within a track with an instrument. Villa was told his songs contained too many instruments.

Now, his songs are much simpler, but Villa still strives to make sure his music is perfected, unique and has that spark that sets it apart from other songs. That spark generally creates great feedback, Villa said.

"When I played at Cherry Festival, I hear people saying, 'I only came to see Freddy and his keyboard. I like his music,'" Villa said. "That makes me feel proud and happy because there's people out there who enjoy what I do. That shows me I'm on the right path."

For information on when Villa's next album will be released, email v_libra_s@hotmail.com.



North Wasco County School District 21 nutritionists Jenna Hert and Elizabeth Diaz hand out sack lunches at Chenoweth Elementary School on March 16, 2020 after the district's spring break was extended as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hert and Diaz said the lunches were available for pickup by school-aged children in the district at Chenoweth Elementary and The Dalles Middle School. Both locations served students from around the district, regardless of which school they attend, they said. Walker Sacon photo

Agencies, communities brace for pandemic

Mark Gibson
 The Dalles Chronicle

Dramatic changes were underway in the Gorge and throughout the state Monday in response to the spread of the novel coronavirus in Oregon.

On Friday, schools were closed statewide and will not reopen until April 1. As of Monday, student meals were made available 11 a.m. to noon at The Dalles Middle School (1100 East 12th St., The Dalles) and Chenoweth Elementary School (922 Chenoweth Loop Road, The Dalles) for all students under 18 years of age, regardless of what school they attend. Meals will be served through March 20.

No paperwork is required, but children must be present.

Meals will be served as a grab and go option, there will be no dining inside the schools.

"We encourage families to continue to be proactive in reducing the risk of COVID-19 by not congregating at the school site and utilizing social distancing once meals have been distributed," said Dottie Ray, nutrition services director.

Those meals are expected to continue throughout the closure.

Seniors

The Mid-Columbia Senior Center was open, but on-site senior meals were canceled, according to Scott McKay, director of the Center. Meals-On-Wheels deliveries were expected to continue. Thursday and Saturday night bingo has also been canceled for the week.

The Washington State Dept of Health has closed meal sites for

Social Distancing

What is social distancing? Health officials define social distancing as avoiding crowds and mass public gatherings, and maintaining a distance of at least three feet from others whenever possible. Social distancing also means staying home when ill, avoiding contact with people who have symptoms of illness and not shaking hands.



the senior lunch programs between March 16 and April 9, according to Annie Maguire of the Lyle Lions Club. They also recommend canceling of all programs involving primarily seniors, she noted. These include meal sites in White Salmon, Goldendale and Lyle.

Meal sites

The Dalles Community Meal will continue to serve free meals to all who are in need of food, said Chris Zukin, chairman of the board. "It is one of those day-by-day decisions," he said. Meals were served over the weekend, although volunteers are taking extra precautions, expanding bleach cleaning of additional

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