

# Appeal Tribune

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## Contact tracers try to reach everyone infected

### Oregon has hundreds of health workers on the job

**Claire Withycombe**  
Salem Statesman Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

As Oregonians continue to get infected with COVID-19, counties have ramped up the number of people dedicated to investigating outbreaks of the disease.

Prior to the pandemic, local counties typically had small teams who tracked outbreaks of diseases such as measles, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections.

But nearly one year since Oregon officials confirmed the state's first case of COVID-19, there are now hundreds of Oregon workers whose job it is to try to reach every person who tested positive for COVID-19.

Some county workers also are still trying to reach close contacts of people who test positive, although the state's health agency has recommended that counties forgo doing that if there is a significant surge in cases and they have to prioritize duties.

These workers have an intimate look at the extent of the pandemic. They know firsthand that patients

range in age from babies to nonagenarians. In cataloging symptoms, they are familiar with the potential severity of the disease.

Jovanna Sardineta Cotero, a bilingual case investigator in Washington County, says she interviewed a woman positive for coronavirus while she was in labor. "When I asked, 'Are you pregnant?' She said, 'Well right now, I'm in labor.'"

"I was like, what? And you're doing this interview with me?" said Sardineta Cotero. "...I don't know how she was managing it."

Generally speaking, case investigators interview

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Chris Gilliland, Silver Falls State Park ranger supervisor, analyzes a charred log just west of the park burned when the Beachie Creek Fire advanced on Silver Falls. KYLE MARTZ / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

## Brown commits to keeping equity at core of recovery

**Connor Radnovich**  
Salem Statesman Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Racial equity and inclusion will be at the core of Oregon's recovery from the crises of 2020 and the foundation of the state's political work for the next two years, Gov. Kate Brown declared during her State of the State address.

"The first step to creating opportunity is recognizing that racism is endemic to our systems, impacting every part of our culture and our economy," Brown said. "I'm committed to ensuring that the world we build as we emerge from this last year is a more equitable one."

Brown identified a handful of specific areas for work, including: ensuring every school in the state has internet access; instituting same-day voter registration; expanding health care access; mitigating wildfire danger; and making the criminal justice system more equitable.

She also acknowledged that it will take more than one budget cycle to reimagine these systems.

"Oregon is evolving out of necessity and out of hope. Our policies and practices are changing as we do more listening to those who've been most harmed," she said.

### Hearing from community members

In a first for Oregon, Brown's State of the State address was prerecorded and released on YouTube and the Oregon Legislative Information System due to the coronavirus transmission risk inherent with large indoor gathering.

It included interviews with Oregonians directly impacted by the pandemic and wildfires, and calls for racial justice.

Her interviews were with: Dr. Antwon Chavis, a pediatrician with OHSU Doernbecher Children's Hospital; Upper McKenzie Fire Chief Christiana Rainbow Plews; Reyna Lopez, executive director of PCUN, Oregon's farmworker union; and Paul Solomon, executive director of Sponsors, Inc., a Eugene-based organization that assists individuals after they are released from incarceration.

They spoke about the challenges they faced in 2020 and the hopes they have for improving the state this year.

Chavis said that children and parents had difficult conversations last year about issues like race and politics, sparked by the widespread unrest. In his role as a pediatrician, he has tried to give parents the vernacular to discuss these issues with their kids.

He has also seen the impact the lack of in-person education is having on families. It's clear, Chavis said, that comprehensive distance learning is not working for many families in the state, and not just from a learning perspective.

"School is more than just education," he said.

Many support services are provided to kids through schools, and kids also socialize and exercise at school. He believes students need to be back in the classroom as soon as possible.

### Wildfire mitigation, other plans

Much of what Brown touched on Thursday was included in her recommended budget, released in December.

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Gov. Kate Brown's State of the State address plays on a display in the media control room at the Oregon State Capitol. Brown's address was prerecorded and released on YouTube and the Oregon Legislative Information System. BRIAN HAYES/STATESMAN JOURNAL

## Inside the fight to save Silver Falls from wildfire

**Kyle Martz and Zach Urness**  
Statesman Journal

Chris Gilliland wasn't sure what to expect when his phone rang at 5:15 a.m. on Sept. 8.

Gilliland, supervisor of park rangers at Silver Falls State Park, knew that wildfires had been reported in the mountains around Detroit Lake the night before, but that was at least 20 to 30 miles away, he figured.

"You need to evacuate the park," said a voice from Oregon State Police dispatch.

"Now?" Gilliland responded.

"Yes, right now," said the voice.

Overnight, a firestorm born near Opal Creek and the Santiam Canyon had raced west on hurricane-force winds and was burning toward Oregon's largest state park.

"We might lose Silver Falls," thought Chris Havel, longtime spokesman and associate director of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. "That's the feeling. You look out the window and you say: 'How is it going to stop?'"

"Silver Falls is one of our oldest, most valued, most visited parks. What if it's gone tomorrow?"

In the coming days, it would be up to a crew of local firefighters to not only stop the fire from burning into Silver Falls, but to protect the nearby community of Drakes Crossing.

### 'You need to leave immediately'

The evacuation of Silver Falls on a holiday weekend wasn't going to be easy. All 105 campsites were booked.

Gilliland was the only overnight ranger on staff that morning. Wasting little time, he woke his wife and had her evacuate. Then he began driving campsite to

campsite, telling each person to get out.

"The task at hand was just saving lives," Gilliland said. "You narrowly focus on what has to get done, and it makes your decision-making black and white."

As smoke and ash blocked the morning sun, police sirens blared and state police arrived to help the evacuation. Gilliland and another ranger, Jason Wagoner, evacuated more than 400 campers — children, grandparents and even 10 horses.

"How long do we have?" asked multiple campers.

"You need to leave immediately," Wagoner told them. "Get in your vehicles, get the most important things, and be on your way."

As the park emptied, access roads became clogged with campers and horse trailers. But after two hours, all of the campers were out — and not a moment too soon. A fire that had already wrought historic destruction in the Santiam Canyon was just a few miles from Silver Falls.

"That fire was moving so fast I don't think anyone knew exactly where it was or when it might arrive," Havel said. "All we could see was smoke and darkness. But we knew it was very close."

### 'We are not going to lose any of the park'

The threat that morning was the Beachie Creek Fire, which blew up Labor Day night as historic east winds reached speeds of 75 mph.

A combination of wildfire from the Opal Creek Wilderness and new fires sparked in the Santiam Canyon raced west in what ultimately became a 193,282-acre blaze — one of the largest in Oregon's history.

After running down the Santiam Canyon to Lyons-

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## Plans filed for first Chick-fil-A in the area

**Emily Teel**  
Salem Statesman Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Ever since it was confirmed that In-N-Out Burger was heading for Keizer Station, Statesman Journal readers have clamored in comment sections for their own cult-favorite fried chicken spot.

Now, as first reported by the Keizertimes, it looks as though they'll get their Chick-fil-A.

In a virtual Jan. 13 meeting of the Keizer Planning Commission, Interim Community Development Director Shane Witham shared that the Georgia-based fast food restaurant franchise has filed an application for an Area D master plan amendment.

Public comment is currently being accepted on the

proposal, and then the Keizer City Council will discuss it on Feb. 1.

"We've been talking about, expecting that some restaurant would come in," Witham said, "and they are the applicant and they are moving forward with an amendment to Area D."

Area D is a nearly 16-acre property in the Chemewa Station development directly across from Keizer Station. The triangular parcel is framed by Chemewa Road to the north, Interstate 5 to the east, the Portland and Western Railroad to the west, and the Salem Parkway to the south.

The project is owned jointly by The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde and The Confederated

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