

VIRUS

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When someone has symptoms of a disease such as COVID 19, said Brogoitti, public heath officials conduct a “contact investigation” of the infected person to determine who they may have come in contact with. From there, health officials find those people.

“If I were one of those contacted, somebody would be reaching out to me,” she said.

Under federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Prevention guidelines, other spectators who may have been in a closed environment with the individual would be considered “low-risk” exposures.

Athena-Weston School District Superintendent Laure Quaresma told the Walla-Walla Union-Bulletin the victim is a man who didn’t have children in the district and the game at the middle school gym was not affiliated with any of the district’s sports teams.

“We don’t have kids with any symptoms,” she told the Union-Bulletin. “We know what to look for and we have been in close contact with Oregon Health Authority.”

The person diagnosed also is an employee at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation confirmed Monday.

As a precaution, the tribes’ board of trustees ordered the closures of Wildhorse Resort & Casino, Nixyaawii Community School, Head Start, Daycare and Senior Center until all facilities have been fully sanitized and cancelled all events on the Umatilla Indian Reservation for the week.

In a conference call with the media, local and statewide health officials tried to caution the public against overreacting to the news while acknowledging the seriousness of the virus.

Umatilla County Public Health



Ben Lonergan/EO Media Group

The Oregon Health Authority confirmed Monday morning an adult Oregon resident from Umatilla County is the state’s third presumptive positive case of COVID-19. Preliminary reports indicate the Oregon resident attended a youth basketball game in the gymnasium at Weston Middle School on Saturday, Feb. 29.



Ben Lonergan/EO Media Group

A sign along Highway 331 in Mission warns that Wildhorse Resort & Casino is closed for cleaning. A Wildhorse employee returned a presumptive positive test for the COVID-19 virus resulting in the closure of Wildhorse as well as several additional CTUIR operations.

Director Joseph Fiumara said his department was starting to receive calls from people concerned about the virus.

“Our entire public health team is diligently working away at following every link we can, and identifying everybody who is

potentially at risk and trying to respond to public requests as they come in,” he said. “But we are being overloaded with calls.”

Dean Sidelinger, the state health officer, also urged caution.

“We know that this disease can cause serious illness and has

resulted in thousands of deaths across the world, but we want to remind people that the vast majority of people infected with COVID-19 will have a mild disease,” he said.

He added that people more likely to suffer more serious symptoms are the elderly and people with other health problems like respiratory issues, heart disease, obesity or diabetes.

Although this particular strain of virus originated in China, Chinese food and products manufactured or shipped from China aren’t public health threats.

Sidelinger said the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory has the ability to test the virus, but because it’s so new, the state is referring to each case as “presumptive” until the CDC can confirm the diagnosis on a retest.

The previous two cases were in the Portland metro area, and with no suspected commonality between them and the Umatilla County case, Sidelinger said Oregonians should expect the virus to spread further in the coming

days.

“We anticipate that these case numbers will increase and we may see more serious illnesses and possibly even deaths within Oregon,” he said.

Brogoitti credited the Oregon Health Authority with its swift efforts to provide information to the public about presumptive cases. She also said the Center for Human Development is working on a coronavirus webpage to serve as the focal point for information about the virus and any developments in Union County.

Meanwhile, other communities in the county continue to make preparations.

Pam Schulz, infection control program manager at Good Shepherd Medical Center in Hermiston, said the hospital is following guidance from the CDC, OHA and Umatilla County Health Department on screening and other procedures.

“It’s currently a moving target,” she said. “We have a plan we’ve modified three times since Friday and we’re modifying it again today.”

Schulz said so far Good Shepherd has not had problems getting medical supplies such as masks, despite an increase in purchases of those items by the general public.

If someone has mild or moderate symptoms they believe may be coronavirus, such as a cough, they can consult with their primary care provider. More serious symptoms such as shortness of breath may need treatment in the emergency room.

Brogoitti said she and other health officials appreciate the public’s concern about the virus. Schulz and Brogoitti encouraged people looking for information to consult fact-based and reliable sources, such as the websites for the Oregon Health Authority and Centers for Disease Control.

“They should make sure they’re getting their information from credible sources,” Schulz said.

DONATION

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gave it to them because they needed it. It was an easy choice to make.”

Ryan Tsiatsos spent about 90 minutes helping Emergency Equipment Solutions load the hay onto trailers early Sunday afternoon before it was taken immediately to Umatilla County. The hay was provided to some of the 107 livestock owners who have notified EES that they are in urgent need of hay, fencing or both. To date these livestock owners have been provided with 370 tons of hay. To say farmers and ranchers are grateful for the assistance they are receiving is a profound understatement.

“We delivered two tons of hay to one rancher (about a week ago), and he literally broke down and cried,” said Valerie O’Dai, senior disaster relief coordinator for Emergency Equipment Solutions.

The hay Emergency Equipment Solutions is delivering is helping stave off starvation for more than a thousand farm animals. O’Dai fears though many others are at risk. She explained many farm animals ran to higher ground outside their owners’ land when the flood hit. Some were able to escape because floodwaters tore down fences and others were set free by landowners who opened gates to let their animals

“It proves our humanity. When there is a need, people respond.”

— Doug Stratton, La Grande

run to safety. Unfortunately a number of animals have not returned, and their status is uncertain.

“Many are unaccounted for,” said O’Dai, an Elgin resident.

She fears some, including horses, may be suffering from poor nutrition while on their own. O’Dai said horses normally eat 15-20 pounds of hay a day and the grasses they are eating in its place are not filling the void.

“There are not enough nutrients in the grasses,” O’Dai said.

Some of the farmers and ranchers receiving hay thought they were in good shape in terms of their hay stock in the week following the flood. Then much of their hay became moldy, making it a threat to horses and sheep. O’Dai said mold can quickly kill horses and sheep, but is not nearly as big a threat to cows and goats.

Mold in hay surfaced as an issue two weeks ago, O’Dai said, when there was a temperature spike in Umatilla County. This sharp rise sparked mold growth in hay that was still damp.

Today, 100 tons of hay is needed to make sure livestock owners do not lose any animals to starvation. O’Dai explained this amount would get livestock owners to the month of May when hay

will be more plentiful after first cuttings and farmers and ranchers have had enough time to develop alternatives means of getting hay.

“We want to sustain them until then,” O’Dai said.

People who want to make donations of hay or funds can contact Emergency Equipment Solutions via email at emergencyequipmentsolutions@yahoo.com. EES also has donation accounts at Wells Fargo and Bank of Eastern Oregon. Those making donations should specify they want their donations to help with Umatilla County flooding.

EES volunteers are helping livestock owners with fencing issues by trying to salvage the fencing they lost to the flood. New fencing is being purchased when old fencing cannot be salvaged.

O’Dai oversaw and helped organize the hay pick-up Sunday in La Grande. Those who also assisted in addition to Tsiatsos family, were Valerie O’Dai’s husband, Mick, the husband and wife team of Rick and Laurie Harvey of Milton-Freewater and Doug Stratton of La Grande.

Stratton said in an age in which society as a whole is often perceived as selfish, it is remarkable how people come out of the woodwork to assist those in need when a tragedy like the Umatilla County flooding occurs.

“It proves our humanity,” Stratton said. “When there is a need, people respond.”

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STATE

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the Nathans and the Parkers and the Bradens and the Christophers and the Gabes, it’s everybody.”

Carson expanded that statement to include everyone involved in the program.

“I’m just so proud of all the coaches and all the parents and all the community — everyone,” he said. “It takes so much. It takes youth wrestling. It takes middle school

wrestling. It takes all the coaches and parents willing to put in the time. Wrestling is extra hard as far as the time it takes and the effort. I’m super proud of the whole community.”

So is the venerable icon who witnessed the success firsthand years ago.

“It makes it especially good for me at my age to see young people still working hard,” Miller said. “We talk about the kind of kids we have — they don’t get any better than this.”

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