MASKS

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Abby Stonebreaker, the hospital's digital media and public relations specialist, said the hospital began receiving inquiries about masks in mid-March. Stonebreaker, who became the liaison for those reaching out to the hospital, said with the changing guidelines for PPE at the time, nailing down how they would use the masks — given cloth masks wouldn't be used for those treating patients — was tricky.

"We knew going into this that cloth masks aren't capable of protecting our front-line staff from COVID-19 the same way that a commercially-produced medical mask does, so we wanted to be sure we had a plan to use these masks prior to accepting donations," she said.

Staff not on those front lines could use the washable mask, which have two layers and are about 8x8 inches, Hedrick said, and are hemmed at the bottom. The hem can hold in a hepa filter, which increases the strength of the mask. Stonebreaker said the hospital gave its OK for the mask on March 31.

"I was pleased that that's where we're going to be able to help with that," Hedrick said.

Community responds to appeal

Simpson, meanwhile, worked on gathering volunteers who wanted to sew masks. Through a Facebook appeal, word of mouth and the sewing network of the area, a group of about 40 people have come together to make masks, and Simpson said the numbers are increasing.

"Every week there is a couple more people," she said. "We continue to look for additional sewers."

Simpson's home became the drop-off point for the masks, and she set up a method to be sure masks could be delivered while limiting the spread of the coronavirus.

ONLINE
- Find the guidelines for making the masks at grh.org/covid-19.

"In order to keep the social distance that we believe is important there is a bag hung on the front gate of my home," she said. "People drop the masks that are sealed in the receiving bag. I put all the individual bags together and give them to the GRH Foundation, the receiver of the bags."

Simpson and Hedrick on April 3 delivered 103 masks to the foundation, and brought about half that total up the following week. Simpson said the numbers were lower for the second drop off because of residents making masks for their own families. The hospital launders the masks before staff don them.

"They will continue to take masks as long as we can provide them," Simpson said.

Hedrick said masks also are going home with front-line workers.

"When we were talking with Patrick (Flynn) who is (manager of) the foundation he said that at this point they're using them in places in the hospital, but they want to be able to send a mask home with the front line workers," she said.

People who have a sewing machine and are interested in helping can contact Simpson at cksw46@msn.com, or can find the guidelines for the masks at grh.org/covid-19.

Stonebreaker expressed appreciation for those who have come together to help, and said Simpson and Hedrick were instrumental in helping to "get the project off the ground."

"It's very important to us that we honor these donations," Stonebreaker said. "They're truly a labor of love."

Contributed photo by Cheryl Simpson

Patrick Flynn, manager of the Grand Ronde Hospital Foundation, receives 103 hand-made masks on Friday, April 3, for hospital staff. Diane Hedrick, retired nurse, and Cheryl Simpson, retired social worker, organized a group of volunteers to sew the face masks for the hospital.

Western states form compact for reopening economies

By Dick Hughes
For the Oregon Capital Insider

SALEM — Oregon is working with Washington and California on when to reopen the states' economies.

"We are announcing that California, Oregon and Washington have agreed to work together on a shared approach for reopening our economies – one that identifies clear indicators for communities to restart public life and business," the three governors said in a statement issued Monday afternoon.

The eventual lifting of social distancing and other interventions will require systems for testing, tracking and isolating individuals with COVID-19, according to Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Washington Gov. Jay Inslee.

They did not give a timeline. Brown is to hold a press conference Tuesday.

"In Oregon, the Governor's Medical Advisory Panel will be involved in reviewing the public health components of decisions related to the lifting of various social distancing orders," Press Secretary Charles Boyle said.

"While each state will have its own specific plan, our office is coordinating with the governor's offices in Washington and California to develop common criteria for this framework and a way for our health departments to coordinate on an ongoing basis."

Boyle said that reopening Oregon would happen neither overnight nor statewide all at once.

"Health outcomes will be the ultimate metric guiding decisions to reopen communities," he said. "We will only reopen Oregon if the data shows we can do so without jeopardizing public health."

The West Coast governors said their common goals included:

•Protecting vulnerable populations at risk for severe disease, including long-term care facilities.

As of last week, COVID-19 cases involving residents or staff had been reported at 32 of Oregon's more than 2,200 long-term care facilities, a category that includes nursing, assisted living and residential care facilities and adult foster homes

•Ensuring adequate hospital capacity and supplies of personal protective equipment, or PPE. As of Monday, Oregon had 153,000 N95 masks on hand to ship to counties and tribes, along with 7,000 surgical masks, 77,000 face shields, 125,000 gloves and 2,500 gowns.

Dr. Bob Dannenhoffer, the Douglas County public health officer and a member of Brown's Medical Advisory Panel, has said he expects the shortage of PPE to become "one of the major pinch points in Oregon."

•Mitigating the non-direct COVID-19 health impacts, particularly on disadvantaged communities.

The governors of New York, Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island announced a similar regional compact on Monday. That was a coincidence, Inslee said during his own televised press conference.

Inslee said the West Coast governors had not asked Idaho Gov. Brad Little about including that neighboring state in their compact.

Earlier Monday, President Donald Trump had tweeted it was his decision, not governors', as to when to reopen state economies.

In response, Inslee said no president has the legal authority to countermand a state's health-based order to stay home.

In their statement, the West Coast governors said: "COVID-19 has preyed upon our interconnectedness. In the coming weeks, the West Coast will flip the script on COVID-19 – with our states acting in close coordination and collaboration to ensure the virus can never spread wildly in our communities."

Inslee described the compact as a general state of principles.

States will share strategies but their timelines may differ.

Each state has made progress on flattening the curve and slowing the spread of COVID-19, the governors said.

New projections, which the Oregon Health Authority released over the weekend, estimated that the state's aggressive social distancing measures had prevented up to 18,000 additional cases of COVID-19, including 500 hospitalizations.

The Institute for Disease Modeling projected that, under current social distancing and business restrictions, the number of active infections would stay at more than 2,000 cases per day through mid-May, then gradually drop.

If schools remained closed non-essential businesses were allowed to reopen, there would more than 17,000 active cases each day.

The economy has been hit hard. In three weeks, nearly 270,000 Oregonians filed initial claims for unemployment. That compares with about 149,000 net job losses during the two-year period of the Great Recession.

VANDALS

Continued from Page 1A

Sue Anderson, manager of the La Grande Cemetery District, said a county crew would have to be approved by her district's board. And the board could not grant the approval without first rescinding its policy prohibiting volunteers from working at any of its four cemeteries. The board adopted this policy several years ago after a new state law took effect requiring entities such as cemetery districts to pay higher workers' compensation insurance fees if volunteers assist them.

Anderson said her staff will first try to see how many of the fallen headstones could be put back up with a backhoe before making a decision on having a work crew assist at Ackles Cemetery.

Beyond knocking headstones off concrete platforms, vandals also broke a pair of lamb heads at a gravesite of two children and shattered the head of a statue, Anderson said.

Catching those responsible will be challenging since the cemetery district has no security cameras at Ackles. Anderson said the district has put up cameras in the past, but they have been destroyed because there is no place to hide them at the treeless site.

Facebook hit

Many people are interested in the vandalism at Ackles Cemetery. Lamoreau said he took pictures of the toppled headstones and posted them on Facebook, where others have shared them more than 500 times. This is far more than anything else he has posted on the social media platform.

Staff photo by Dick Mason

John Lamoreau surveys vandalism at Ackles Cemetery. Union County Sheriff Boyd Rasmussen said he thinks the crimes have occurred over a span of six months.

"People are furious about this," Lamoreau said.

It is easy to distinguish the headstones that were recently pushed off and the others that fell to the ground years ago. The concrete bases of the headstones with recent damage have no moss growing on them, but the bases of the ones toppled years ago have moss, Lamoreau said.

"The lack of moss tells you that it was recent," he said.

Lamoreau also speculated about how much work went into the crimes.

"It must have taken two or three people (to push each headstone off)," Lamoreau said. "It must have taken so much effort that I can't comprehend it."

Rasmussen said the sheriff's office has been alerting people who live near the cemetery to be on the lookout for suspicious activity and law enforcement if they see anything. The sheriff said he can understand why people may have not seen questionable activity in the past because the cemetery is about 200 yards off Mt. Glen Road and most people passing it are driving between 45-50 mph.

Three-century legacy

Ackles Cemetery was created in the mid-1800s as a family cemetery, Anderson said. It was then deeded to the Methodist Church and in 1955 became part of the La Grande Cemetery District.

Lamoreau visited Ackles Cemetery last week to see if he could find information for how the 1918-20 influenza pandemic affected the Grande Ronde Valley. He said the number of people buried at the cemetery who died of that flu appears to be small. Most of the people buried in Ackles Cemetery died before 1960, and nobody has been buried there since 1988. The cemetery has no more room for burial plots, Anderson said.

Previous vandalism

This is not the first the La Grande Cemetery District has dealt with extensive vandalism. Anderson said that in 2009 a total of 109 headstones were toppled at Hillcrest Cemetery on 12th Street. Fortunately all were later restored.

Lamoreau is dismayed and mystified when thinking about what prompts people to be so destructive.

"I believe that history should be honored, not desecrated," he said.

He noted one of the vandalized headstones was that for a child who died at such a young age her parents had not yet given her a name. Lamoreau said he can't believe how anyone could attempt to destroy such a precious memorial.

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