



SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

# THE OBSERVER

# Weekend Edition

SATURDAY-MONDAY • June 13, 2020 • \$1.50 Good day to our valued subscriber Shawn Fuller of Elgin

## Union County COVID-19 cases more than double in a week

By Sabrina Thompson  
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — Union County's total number of COVID-19 cases shot up to 13, more than doubling in less than a week.

The Center for Human Development, La Grande, reported the five new cases — one presumptive and four confirmed — Friday afternoon.

"These additional cases may be part of a cluster of related cases, often referred to as an outbreak, which public health is currently investigating," according to the press release from the center.

CHD Public Health Administrator Carrie Brogoitti explained what a presumptive case

means: "It could mean they've been tested and are waiting, could mean they tested and were negative but fit the criteria, or they could have been tested previously and results were negative but are being tested again."

The Oregon Health Authority, meanwhile, announced Friday the state has 142 new confirmed and presumptive COVID-19 cases, but listed only four new cases in Union County. The Center for Human Development reported the state will update its total online at <https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19> later Friday.

Wallowa County remains at four cases total with three active. Neither county has had any deaths from the virus.

Union County's total number of COVID-19 cases increased on Tuesday to seven, then to eight a day later. Friday's announcement of five more marks the most for any day in the county. The week's worth of new cases come in the wake of the county entering Phase 2 of Gov. Kate Brown's reopening plan and after the county began more widespread testing for coronavirus. The increase is something Brogoitti said she knew was possible as the county opened up.

"Any gathering, such as protests, graduation celebrations, parades, are instances where people gathering in larger groups can pose

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## COVID-19 by the numbers\*

Worldwide cases: 7,410,510  
Worldwide deaths: 418,294  
U.S. cases: 2,016,027  
U.S. deaths: 113,914  
Total U.S. tests: 22,418,881  
Oregon cases: 5,377  
Oregon active cases: 2,854  
Oregon deaths: 173  
Total Oregon tests: 166,019  
Union County cases: 13  
Union County active cases: 8  
Union County deaths: 0  
Total Union County tests: 619  
Wallowa County cases: 4  
Wallowa County active cases: 3  
Wallowa County deaths: 0  
Total Wallowa County tests: 232  
\*As of 2 p.m. Friday, June 12.

Sources: World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Military Department.

## FAQ

### THERE IS A CASE IN MY COMMUNITY. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

During an outbreak, stay calm and put your preparedness plan to work. Follow the steps below:

- Stay home if you are sick.

- Keep away from people who are sick. Limit close contact with others as much as possible (about 6 feet).

- Stay informed about the local COVID-19 situation, including temporary school dismissals in your area.

- Continue practicing everyday preventive actions. Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

- If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains 60% alcohol.

- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects daily.

- Notify your workplace as soon as possible if your regular work schedule changes. Ask to work from home or take leave if you or someone in your household

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Staff photo by Dick Mason

Peggy Lanman, a volunteer driver for Meals on Wheels, loads milk into her car Tuesday before making deliveries. The La Grande-based meal delivery service has seen an increase in the demand for services during the coronavirus outbreak.

## Meals on Wheels picking up speed

### Community Connection expands food program

By Dick Mason  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Meals on Wheels in Union County is rolling along at a quick pace.

The program is providing an increasing number of meals to homebound Union County residents, according to Sydney Gleeson, the food services manager for Community Connection of Northeast Oregon at the Union County Senior Center.

"We are seeing some of the highest levels we've had in a long time," said Gleeson, who has worked at the Union County Senior Center for 15 years.

Gleeson said the demand for Meals on Wheels, run by the

Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, which operates the senior center, is up sharply because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is hitting those older than 60 the hardest. Many seniors are fearful of leaving their homes as a result and thus are asking for Meals on Wheels service.

"Many do not have family members who live in the area who

can help them," Gleeson said.

Prior to the pandemic, Meals on Wheels in Union County was preparing and delivering 2,000 lunches a month. Now the number is more than 2,400, Gleeson said.

The program implemented significant changes in delivering meals because of social distancing rules the state has in

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## Eastern Oregon commissioners challenge reopening rules

### All three Union County commissioners, two from Wallowa County attend without notice to public

By Ronald Bond  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A dozen county commissioners — including all three from Union County and two from Wallowa County — met Thursday in Prairie City to air grievances about what they believe is the state's mishandling of the coronavirus pandemic. "To be more than blunt it was



Anderes

basically an opportunity for folks to get together and talk about frustrations we are having with the process and communication from the executive branch of Oregon's government," Union County Commissioner Paul Anderes told The Observer Friday.

Commissioners from seven counties — Union, Wallowa, Lake, Grant, Deschutes, Harney and Jefferson — met to discuss a range of topics that, according to Anderes, included "concerns folks had, whether it be school opening,

athletics, group gatherings, business openings, what are the rules, how do they apply, things like that."

The commissioners held the meeting without giving a public notice.

"We didn't publicly notice it specifically," Anderes said, "but I talked about (attending) it in a public meeting."

He and Wallowa County Commissioner Susan Roberts contended the meeting was not held in secret, noting news reporters covered the meeting.

Roberts said state's guidelines have been "all over the board"

and pointed to what she said were inconsistencies in what the state allows. An example she cited was the state's OK with protests in the 1,000s over the killing of George Floyd — in groups clearly violating social distancing measures put in place to slow the spread of the coronavirus — but graduations, for example, can't be held.

"Why is it we can't have a local high school grad with 13 graduates (but) 10,000 people can form on the street of Oregon? No one can trace that down (if the virus spreads)," she said. "We were

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### WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 43 LOW A few showers  
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### CONTACT US

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