



EJ Hersom/U.S. Department of Defense  
Oregon will require personnel in health care settings to show proof of vaccination or undergo weekly COVID-19 tests.

## Virus: State's weekly report outlined community spread

Continued from Page A1

would apply starting Sept. 30 so hospitals and other health care providers and workers have time to prepare.

"The more contagious delta variant has changed everything," the governor said in a statement. "This new safety measure is necessary to stop delta from causing severe illness among our first line of defense: our doctors, nurses, medical students and front-line health care workers. Protecting our front-line health care workers through vaccination will also enhance the safety of the patients in their care."

"Severe illness from COVID-19 is now largely preventable, and vaccination is clearly our best defense. Vaccination and weekly testing ensure Oregonians can safely access health care and employees can go to work in an environment that maximizes health and safety measures for COVID-19."

### Statewide patterns

The Oregon Health Authority's weekly report on the community spread of COVID-19 outlined the patterns statewide for the last few weeks of July.

In Wallowa County, 1 out of 4 people tested for COVID-19 was positive.

Umatilla County had 915 cases per 100,000 people, by far the most in the state.

Multnomah County, the state's most populous, reported 1,013 new cases over the two-week time frame, its shallower rise still driving big total numbers.

Lake County was the only one of Oregon's 36 counties to record a drop in reported cases.

The arrival of the weekly report once meant Brown would assign risk levels based on the prevalence of COVID-19 within county boundaries.

Where a county fell on the risk chart determined what businesses could be open, how many customers could go into stores, how late bars could stay open and whether diners could sit down for a meal or had to buy takeout.

The measurements — cases per 100,000 population and percentage of tests that were positive — controlled Oregon residents' lives for much of the past fall, winter and spring.

With the steep drop in the infection rate as a majority of Oregonians started getting vaccinated, Brown unshackled the fate of local lives and economies from the weekly report's ups and downs. At the end of June, the governor handed over control of public health decisions to counties.

The weekly reports continue to come out, though the health authority delayed delivery of the numbers this week by a day. If the list still carried restrictions, at least 22 counties — including

*'COUNTIES, CITIES AND EMPLOYERS ALSO HAVE THE ABILITY TO INSTITUTE THEIR OWN SAFETY MEASURES AND REQUIREMENTS, AND WE EXPECT LOCAL LEADERS IN AREAS MOST IMPACTED BY COVID-19 TO TAKE ACTION.'*

Charles Boyle | spokesman for Gov. Kate Brown

Clatsop County — would be under the extreme risk level, which carried the highest restrictions.

Clatsop County had 238 cases per 100,000 population and a test positivity rate of 8.7%, higher than the statewide rate of 205 cases per 100,000 and a test positivity rate of 6.9%.

In early July, Oregon showed a seven-day average of 110 new cases in the whole state. It had not been so low since early June 2020 when the pandemic was still in its early days.

There would be four waves of infection by the beginning of this summer. But the arrival of vaccines seemed to guarantee the dark days of winter, when the seven-day average topped out at 1,515 new cases, were gone forever.

Now, Oregon is back to wintry numbers of infections, and some hospitals are again stretched to the limit.

A saving grace is that most of the most vulnerable — the very elderly and those with serious medical conditions — have had access to vaccinations. That has made the wave of deaths that once followed after reported infections and hospitalizations shallower and shorter.

Brown's decision to lift restrictions on June 30 when the state closed in on vaccinating 70% of eligible adult residents came as new infections were at their lowest levels in over a year.

But just as the state opened up, the delta variant arrived in force. In areas of the state with large numbers of unvaccinated people, it wreaked immediate havoc.

### Rapid spread

The Oregon Health Authority is investigating the role of the Whisky Music Fest concert in Pendleton in July that drew 12,000 and has led to dozens of reported virus cases, primarily in Umatilla County.

The investigation underlines a structural problem with the state's plan to have local authorities enforce the rules. Public health officials are hired by local government officials. The officials are elected by local voters. In areas where vaccination rates are low, including much of eastern and southwestern Oregon, there is still doubt — and sometimes outright hostility — toward any restrictions such as mandatory masks.

Umatilla County Pub-

lic Health Director Joe Fiumara told the East Oregonian this week that he expects COVID-19 cases to rise because of the county fair later this month.

"I think if you're trying to reduce cases, I think canceling the fair would be a way to do that," Fiumara said. "And I think it would be an effective way to prevent additional spread."

But Fiumara said he would not formally recommend cutbacks or closing the event because of the backlash that would ensue.

"I'm not sure all the fallout from canceling it would be worthwhile. I think there would be a lot of pushback," he said.

For her part, Brown and her administration have put the focus back on counties, many of which were clamoring for months for more local control.

While other states and cities are pushing for mandatory rules, Oregon's mask-wearing guidance is voluntary.

The state has issued a requirement that workers and visitors to state buildings must wear masks.

After a second mandate following federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance to require masks in schools, Brown got a taste of blowback over the past few days as schools boards and parents pushed back.

Instead of waiting for the state to impose new sanctions, Brown has said localities should step up, "follow the science" and take action themselves.

"While we have learned not to rule anything out, we also know that locally-driven response efforts are most effective at this stage in the pandemic to reach unvaccinated Oregonians," said Charles Boyle, a spokesman for Brown.

Boyle said nothing is stopping locals from acting — and the state is ready to help with materials such as vaccines and public health workers — to make any action a success.

"Counties, cities and employers also have the ability to institute their own safety measures and requirements, and we expect local leaders in areas most impacted by COVID-19 to take action," Boyle said.

The Oregon Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

August  
5th, 6th and 7th

# MAIN ST. MARKET

## SIX YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!



**ST. HELEN'S BEEF**  
BONELESS  
NY STRIP STEAKS  
**\$6<sup>99</sup> lb**



**ST. HELEN'S BEEF**  
BONE IN RIB  
STEAK  
**\$6<sup>99</sup> lb**



**BEST FOODS MAYO**  
30 OZ.  
**3 FOR \$6<sup>00</sup>**



**BUSH'S BAKED BEANS**  
28 OZ.  
**3 FOR \$6<sup>00</sup>**



**HUNT'S KETCHUP**  
20 OZ.  
**69¢ ea**  
LIMIT 4



**ESSENTIAL EVERYDAY  
CANNED VEGGIES**  
15 OZ.  
**69¢ ea**  
SELECTED VARIETIES

**PRODUCE TENT SALE IN THE PARKING LOT**



**HERMISTON WATERMELONS**  
**\$5<sup>99</sup> ea**



**HERMISTON CANTELOUPES**  
**49¢ lb.**



**SWEET CORN**  
**10 FOR \$5<sup>00</sup>**



**NW PEACHES**  
**\$2<sup>69</sup> lb.**



**NW NECTARINES**  
**\$2<sup>69</sup> lb.**



**PLUMS**  
**\$1<sup>99</sup> lb.**



**BELL PEPPERS  
GREEN, RED,  
ORANGE, YELLOW**  
**99¢ ea**



facebook.com/MainStSelectMarket



instagram.com/mainstmarketwarrenton

# MAIN ST. MARKET

**191 S. Main Ave., Warrenton**  
**503-861-2271**  
[www.MainStSelect.com](http://www.MainStSelect.com)