

Washington Hospitals Again Strained By COVID-19 Spread

State health officials urge mask-wearing

The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Hospital officials in Washington are urging people to wear masks and warning that facilities are heading toward another COVID-19 case peak amid high spread in the community.

Washington State Hospital Association CEO Cassie Sauer on Monday said at the end of last week, almost 600 people with COVID-19 were in hospitals across the state with about 20-25 patients a day on ventilators, *The News Tribune* reported.

That compares with an average of around 230 hospitalized cases in the daily census in April and 1,700 in February during the Omicron wave.

In response to the rising hospitalizations, officials on a media briefing call Monday implored people to wear high-quality masks indoors in crowded, public spaces, and to get COVID-19 booster shots on top of vaccinations.

“It’s still something you don’t want to get and we want to urge you to do everything you can to protect yourself,”

said Cassie Sauer, Washington State Hospital Association CEO.

Rising case numbers and hospitalization rates prompted state public health officials to urge indoor masking two weeks ago, but they stopped short of announcing new statewide mandates.

“We want to urge you to do everything you can to protect yourself

Community spread is also affecting health care workers and straining hospital staffing levels, officials said.

“When there’s COVID in the community, there’s COVID among staff members as well,” said Dr. Chris Baliga, infectious disease specialist at Virginia Mason Franciscan Health, noting again that a COVID-19 infection can remove a health care worker from the workplace for at least 10 days.

Dr. David Carlson, executive vice president Provider Enterprise and chief physician officer for MultiCare, which has hospitals and clinics around the state, said his health system was running at about 120% of normal capacity, faced not just with COVID-19 cases but “pent-up demand” for care that went unaddressed in the pandemic’s early days.

Officials on Monday said if people test positive many should seek treatment as quickly as possible given the long list of qualifying conditions for COVID-19 therapeutics, such as Paxlovid.

“We are at a point where we have supplies for all of this. Feel free to reach out to providers to try to get them,” Baliga said.

Dr. Steven Mitchell with the Washington Medical Coordination Center at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle said that requests from hospitals for help in easing patients loads with transfers have doubled in recent days.

“Our health care system continues to be remarkably strained,” he said.

Seattle Police Expand Body-Worn Camera Use

The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Seattle police officers assigned to federal law enforcement task forces will now be required to wear and activate body-worn cameras during arrests.

Interim police Chief Adrian Diaz updated the agency’s policy after an Seattle detective was one of three officers who fatally shot California homicide suspect Marshall Jones III last week in the Seattle suburb of Kent, *The Seattle Times* reported.

Officers were trying to arrest him in the January disappearance and presumed death of his ex-girlfriend, 24-year-old Alexis Gabe.

The updated policy will ensure encounters with suspects are captured on video — and provide consistency for Seattle officers working with federal and state agencies, Diaz said.

Seattle Detective Matthew Lilje, a Snohomish County sheriff’s detective and a deputy U.S. marshal — all assigned to the Pacific Northwest Violent



(Photo/Remy Gieling)

Offender Task Force — opened fire on Jones last Wednesday when he charged the officers with a knife, according to Seattle police.

Diaz said the policy update will affect eight to 10 Seattle officers who serve on such inter-agency teams.

“When you’re not providing information about an incident or you don’t see a video, it leaves a lot of questions for the community,” Diaz said.

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Yoskar, with behavioral health provider Dr. Manangan