

Seattle nursing homes get tests without cases

By GENE JOHNSON AND TED S. WARREN
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Pairs of doctors and nurses in plastic gowns and purple gloves moved down the nursing home’s halls in a tandem ballet.

Test kit handoff, nasal swab, specimen bag drop. Squeeze of hand sanitizer, new gown. Another squeeze, new gloves. Next room.

Within 90 minutes, the team had tested all 115 residents of Queen Anne Healthcare, a Seattle nursing home considered a high priority for coronavirus testing for an odd-sounding reason: It had no reports of the virus.

“One of the greatest values is to catch it before it spreads,” said Dr. Thuan Ong, the University of Washington’s medical director of post-acute care. “It’s much easier to do contact tracing when you know there’s zero cases, or one or two cases. When you have a facility that has five, 10, 15 cases, it’s incredibly hard to know who came into contact with those people.”

Last week, Public Health-Seattle & King County officials sent Ong a list of 19 Seattle-area nursing homes. The facilities, which represent more than



Dr. Gabrielle Beger, left, prepares to take a nose-swab sample on April 17, 2020, from Lawrence McGee, as she works with a team of University of Washington medical providers conducting testing for the new coronavirus at Queen Anne Healthcare, a skilled nursing and rehabilitation facility in Seattle.

one-third of all skilled nursing facilities in the county, were considered a top priority because no residents had tested positive.

By Wednesday, teams had tested all residents and staff at four of the homes, with other sites planned in coming days. None of the residents was positive, but the tests identified two asymptomatic staff members at one of the facilities, enabling them to be isolated before

spreading the virus further.

Nursing homes around the country have complained about a lack of adequate testing. But in the Seattle area, which suffered the first bad outbreak in the U.S., public health officials are no longer merely responding to hotspots at skilled nursing facilities but trying to head them off.

Along with better capacity for tracing contacts of patients, widespread testing

is an important prerequisite for reopening the economy. Gov. Jay Inslee this week announced he intends to increase the number of those devoted to contact tracing from 700 to 1,500, with help from the National Guard. Washington state is moving toward testing all residents at any long-term care facility that has had a positive COVID-19 test among staff or residents.

Sending “drop teams”

to conduct universal testing at skilled nursing facilities in collaboration with public health officials is one aspect of the region’s approach to controlling COVID-19. UW Medicine has taken advantage of its existing network of skilled nursing facilities, sending experts to train staff on using personal protection equipment and demonstrating for administrators how they might isolate residents who test positive.

During outbreaks in rural areas, the university and Harborview Medical Center staff have helped direct patients to various hospitals so that local ones don’t get overwhelmed, as happened early on when dozens of patients from the Life Care Center of Kirkland were brought to a single nearby hospital, Evergreen Hospital.

At one nursing home where a university-led team tested all staff and residents this month amid an outbreak with dozens of cases, administrators grouped all positive residents into one wing, Ong said. The facility — CRISTA Rehab and Skilled Care in Shoreline — was then able to assign specific staff members to that wing, rather than having them also interact with negative residents. The result? The workers did not have to constantly replace

their personal protection equipment, thus conserving precious masks, gloves and gowns.

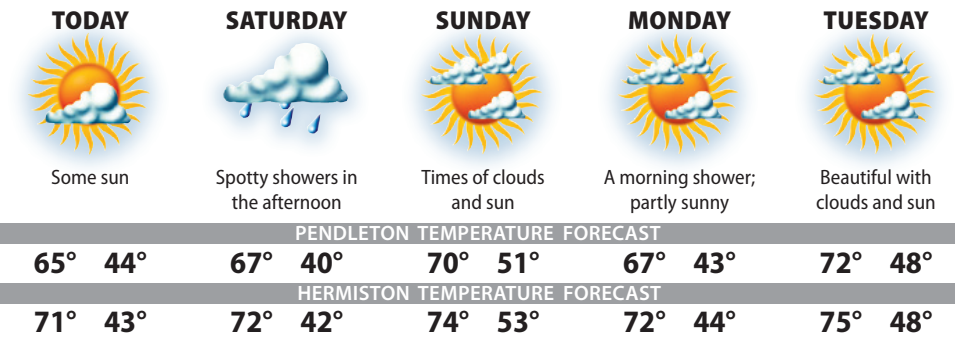
Queen Anne Healthcare previously had eight residents with symptoms tested for COVID — none was positive. On April 17, three days after Ong received the list, he pulled up in his white Volvo SUV and opened the hatchback to reveal stacked boxes of protective gear along with test vials, paperwork forms and labels, and red biohazard bags for collecting used protection equipment.

Close to 20 other medical professionals drawn from a roster of volunteers met with him in the parking lot, reviewing the procedures for testing. They broke into pairs, with one “hot” person entering the rooms and administering the tests while the other “clean” person stayed in the hall, observing for signs of broken protocol and doling out test kits and squirts of sanitizer.

Queen Anne Healthcare administrator Erin Doss said she woke up the following morning to an email from Ong saying all the tests were negative. Her staff cheered when she told them, she said.

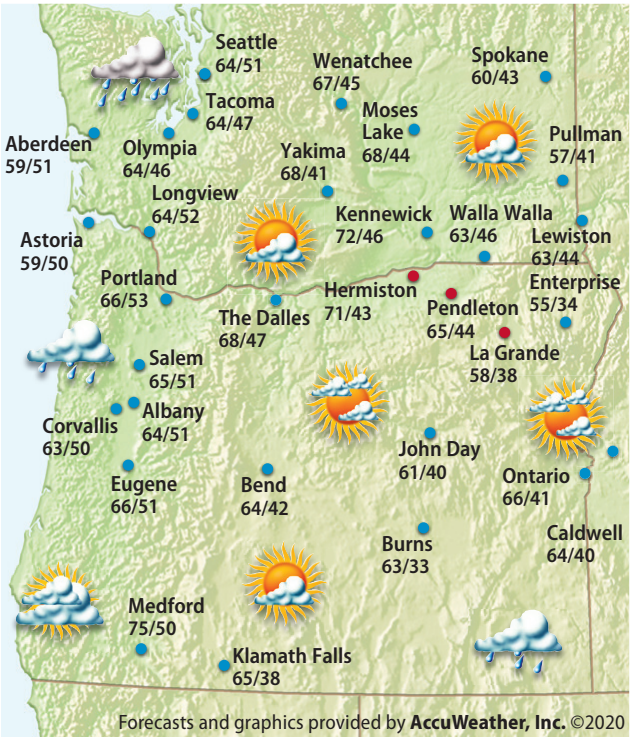
“It’s really helpful to know all my residents are negative. It was stressful to not know,” Doss said.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



ALMANAC

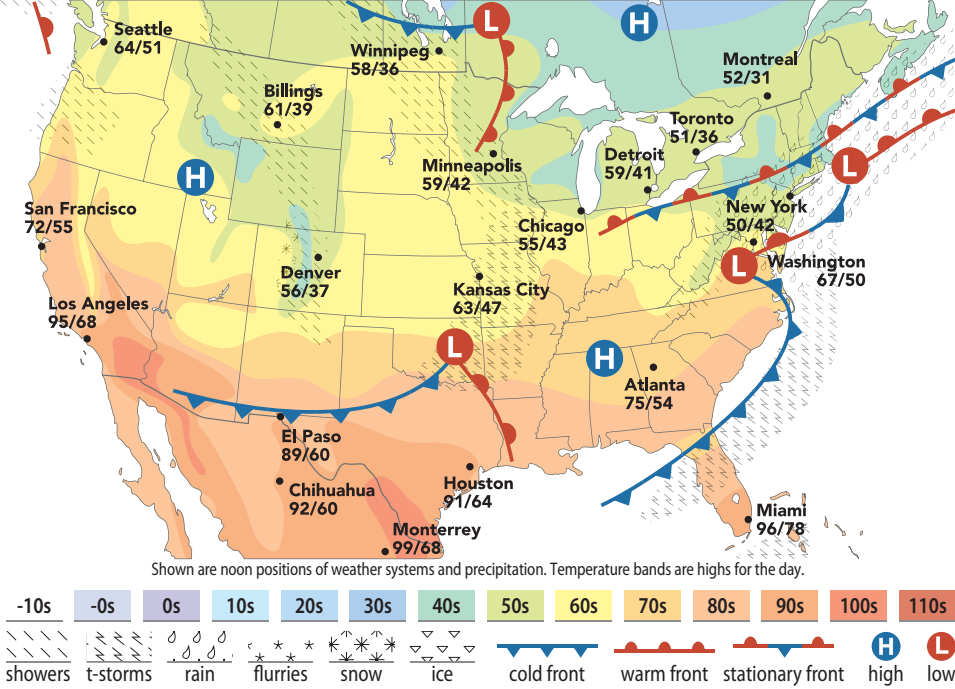
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	67°	50°	
Normals	64°	40°	
Records	89° (1910)	26° (2013)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.03"		
Month to date	0.10"		
Normal month to date	0.90"		
Year to date	5.05"		
Last year to date	7.76"		
Normal year to date	4.90"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	70°	53°	
Normals	67°	41°	
Records	86° (2012)	24° (2013)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace		
Month to date	0.03"		
Normal month to date	0.64"		
Year to date	0.51"		
Last year to date	3.88"		
Normal year to date	3.78"		
WINDS (in mph)			
	Today	Sat.	
Boardman	WSW 6-12	WSW 6-12	
Pendleton	WSW 6-12	SSW 7-14	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	5:53 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	7:54 p.m.		
Moonrise today	6:59 a.m.		
Moonset today	9:43 p.m.		

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 104° in Falfurrias, Texas Low 14° in Yellowstone N.P., Wyo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Tyson plant to close temporarily

1,400 workers being tested for coronavirus

By JEDIDIAH MAYNES
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLULA, Wash. — Tyson Fresh Meats in Wallula is temporarily shutting down.

Health officials in Walla Walla, Benton and Franklin counties will work with the company to test its more than 1,400 employees for COVID-19 as soon as possible, according to an announcement from Tyson this morning.

As numbers of COVID-19-infected workers at the Wallula facility continued to climb this week — with news Wednesday of the death of one infected worker from the Tri-Cities — family and friends of employees joined together to urge the meat-processing facility to shut down.

Benton-Franklin Health District officials reported 91 cases of the coronavirus linked to the facility among residents of Benton and

Franklin counties so far. That brought the total to more than 100 when counting Walla Walla and Umatilla counties’ linked cases, as of Thursday morning.

“Resuming operations is dependent on a variety of factors, including the outcome of team member testing for COVID-19 and how long it takes to get results back,” the company stated in its release today. “Tyson and local health officials are working on a plan to resume production while keeping team members safe by further educating workers on CDC guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19.”

According to the release, workers will be compensated during the shutdown.

Tyson Fresh Meats was under pressure from health officials for testing, but also from a petition signed by family members and friends of workers at the facility who were calling for the plant to shut down temporarily to quell the outbreak of COVID-19.

They had said it was unsafe to work at the plant.

The news follows the closure of two other Tyson plants in Waterloo, Iowa, and Logansport, Indiana, on Wednesday.

“We’re working with local health officials to bring the plant back to full operation as soon as we believe it to be safe,” Steven Stouffer, group president of Tyson Fresh Meats, said in the release. “Unfortunately, the closure will mean reduced food supplies and presents problems to farmers who have no place to take their livestock. It’s a complicated situation across the supply chain.”

Concerned family members in Walla Walla County spoke out about a work environment they believe is unsafe.

The Walla Walla County Department of Community Health said Tyson would be required to have all of its workers tested. The plant was also checked by health inspectors on April 13 and again Monday to ensure compliance of the health department’s social-distancing restrictions and other measures.

Walla Walla Veterans Home employee tests positive for COVID-19

WALLA WALLA, Wash. — An employee at the Walla Walla Veterans Home has been diagnosed with COVID-19, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Veterans Affairs announced Wednesday night.

The employee is self-isolated at home. Confirmation of the diagnosis was shared with operators late Tuesday night, the announcement said.

In consultation with the Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center, where the 80-bed state nursing care facility is colocated in eight individual homes, testing of all residents at the facility was

scheduled to begin Wednesday.

“The positive test of one of our staff reinforces the need to conduct testing as we work to safeguard the veterans and families in our care,” said the announcement issued by Heidi Audette, communications and legislative director for the state Department of Veterans Affairs.

Additionally, enhanced surveillance is being conducted. That includes four-hour symptom and temperature checks for all residents over the next 14 days.

Staff will wear procedure masks when providing resident care. They have been wearing cloth masks at all times in the Veterans Home since April 15 to prevent potential asymptomatic carriers from inadvertently sharing the virus.

— Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

CORRECTIONS: The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

EAST OREGONIAN

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed major holidays

EastOregonian.com

To subscribe, call 1-800-522-0255
or go online to EastOregonian.com
and click on 'Subscribe'

East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published daily except Sunday,
Monday and postal holidays, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers
Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR.
Postmaster: send address changes to
East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801.
Copyright © 2020, EO Media Group

Subscriber services:

For mail delivery, online access, vacation stops
or delivery concerns call 1-800-522-0255 ext. 1

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Local home delivery	Savings (cover price)
EZPay	\$13/month	60 percent
52 weeks	\$173.67	41 percent
26 weeks	\$91.86	38 percent
13 weeks	\$47.77	36 percent

*EZ Pay = one-year rate with a monthly credit
or debit card/check charge

Single copy price:

\$1.50 Tuesday through Saturday

Circulation Dept.

800-781-3214

ADVERTISING

Regional Publisher and Revenue Director:

• Christopher Rush

541-278-2669 • crush@eomediagroup.com

Advertising Manager:

• Angela Treadwell

541-966-0827 • atreadwell@eastoregonian.com

Multimedia Consultants:

• Jeanne Jewett

541-564-4531 • jjewett@eastoregonian.com

• Audra Workman

541-564-4538 • aworkman@eastoregonian.com

Business Office Coordinator

• Dayle Stinson

541-278-2670 • dstinson@eastoregonian.com

Classified & Legal Advertising

1-800-962-2819 or 541-278-2678

classifieds@eastoregonian.com or legals@eastoregonian.com

NEWS

• To submit news tips and press releases:

call 541-966-0818 or email news@eastoregonian.com

• To submit community events, calendar items and Your EO News:
email community@eastoregonian.com or call Renee Struthers
at 541-966-0818.

• To submit engagements, weddings and anniversaries:
email rstuthers@eastoregonian.com or visit eastoregonian.
com/community/announcements

• To submit sports or outdoors information or tips:
541-966-0838 • sports@eastoregonian.com

Business Office Manager:

541-966-0824

COMMERCIAL PRINTING

Production Manager: Christopher Rush

541-278-2669 • crush@eomediagroup.com