

Inslee: Construction can resume, with distancing

All contractors must develop and post a plan at each site

By RACHEL LA CORTE
Associated Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Thousands of constructions workers could soon be back on sites across the state to finish existing projects after Washington Gov. Jay Inslee on Friday announced a plan that allows those jobs to resume as long as strict coronavirus social distancing protocols are in place.

Before work on the projects can resume, all contractors must develop and post a plan at each site that addresses use of the personal protective equipment like masks and gloves, on-site social distancing and sanitation. In addition, a site-specific supervisor will be designated to enforce the safety plan to monitor the health of employees, and employees will undergo training on the new policies.

“If it can’t be done with social distancing, then it cannot proceed at this time,” Inslee said, and he warned sites will be shut down if they do not follow the protocols once they resume work.

Construction was halted under the stay-at-home order and closure of nonessential businesses that Inslee ordered last month. There were some exemptions, including projects related to health care, energy, and publicly financed



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

Because of the need to maintain a structural schedule, work continues on townhouses under construction during the coronavirus outbreak on Friday in Seattle. Gov. Jay Inslee announced that some construction projects will be allowed to resume amid the coronavirus pandemic, including “low-risk” projects and only with physical distancing and other requirements.

low-income housing, as well as emergency repairs.

Inslee had been working with a construction work group in previous weeks, including the Building Industry Association of Washington, the Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council and the Association of Washington Business, to come up with the plan announced Friday.

He said he plans to convene similar work groups with other industries to discuss a path to lifting restrictions in other sectors of the economy.

Mark Riker, executive secretary of the Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council, said the groups put aside their differences to focus on worker safety and restarting con-

struction as soon as possible.

Riker later said the governor’s action means thousands of workers will be back to work, though he said it’s hard to quantify right now since projects must first show they meet the terms before they can restart.

Greg Lane, executive vice president, Building Industry Association of Washington, said he

believed some work could start as early as Friday, with more over the weekend and into next week.

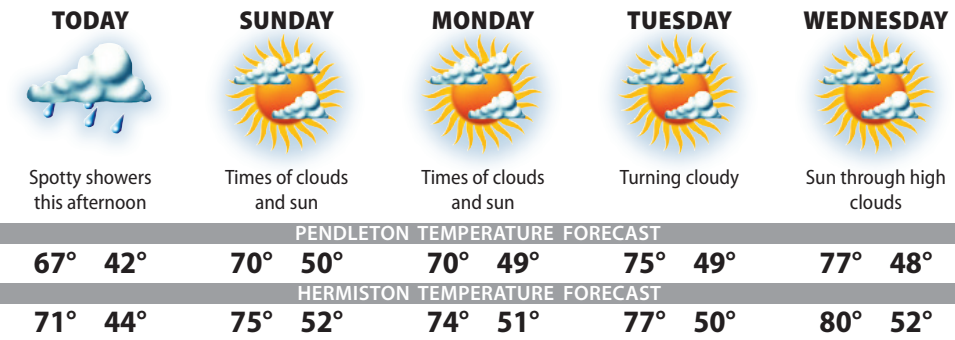
Earlier this week, Inslee had said the state will not be able to lift many of the stay-at-home restrictions implemented to fight the coronavirus by May 4 — the date through which the current directive is currently in place — but he hoped health modeling in recent days would allow resumption of some activities, including residential construction. He said while additional decisions on elective surgery and outdoor recreation will be made in the coming days, “we cannot say when other businesses will reopen.”

Inslee has said while the state was making progress in slowing the spread of the virus, he still urged caution.

“We can’t make decisions based on arbitrary dates, we have to make it based on real data,” he said. “It would be way too dangerous and all of our data shows that if we did this today, this virus would return with a vengeance.”

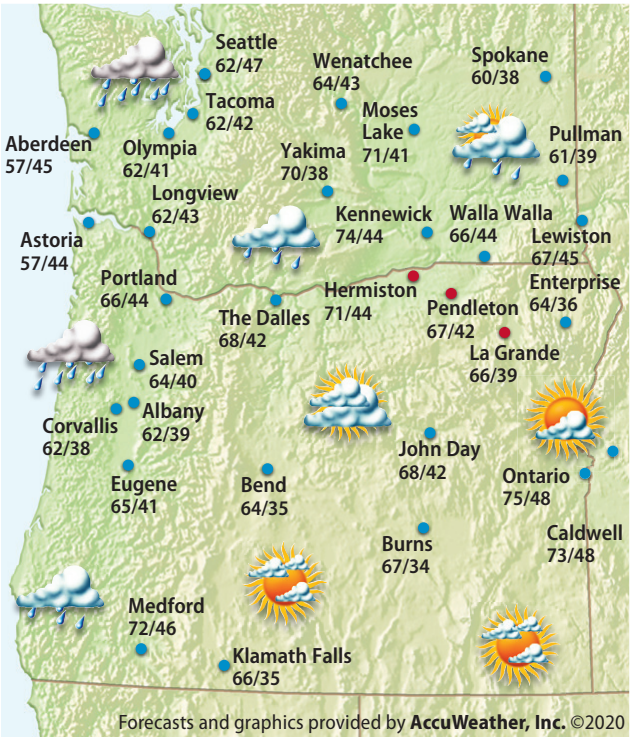
More than 12,750 people in Washington state have tested positive for the virus and at least 711 have died. The virus causes mild to moderate symptoms in most patients, and the vast majority recover. But it is highly contagious and can be spread by those who appear healthy and can cause severe illness and death in some patients, particularly the elderly and those with underlying health conditions.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



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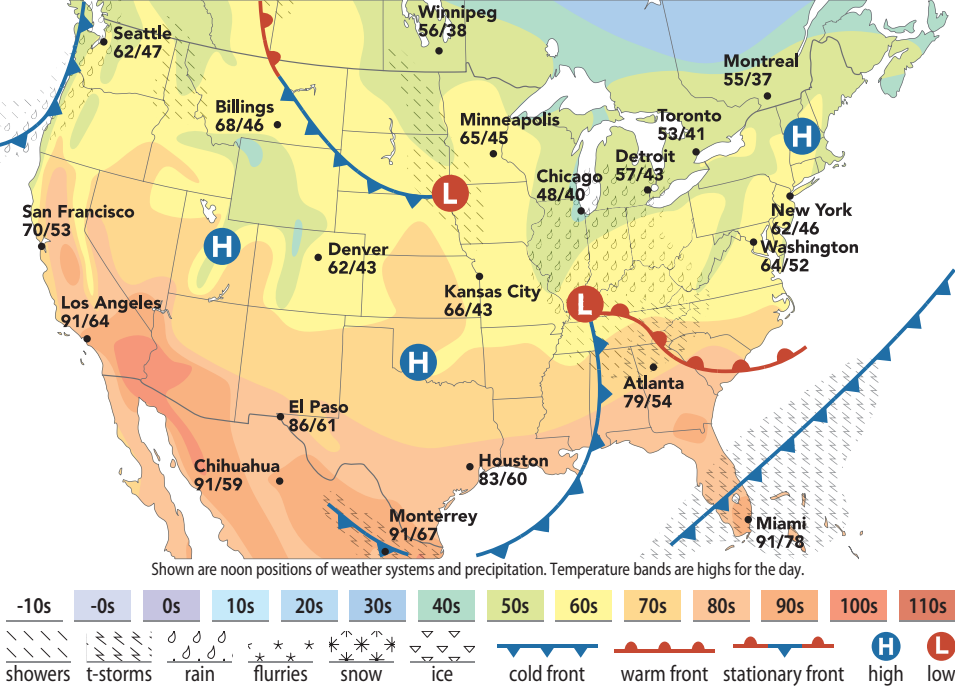
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NATIONAL EXTREMES

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NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Sheriff dials back on reopening request

By EMILY THORNTON
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA, Wash. — Following public outcry from an open letter he posted on social media Thursday morning, Walla Walla County Sheriff Mark Crider stepped back on his position about reopening the economy.

Reopening should be done in a safe and productive manner rather than every business at once, Crider said Thursday afternoon.

He said his statement, posted first on the Walla Walla County Sheriff's Office social media page just before 9:30 a.m., did not fully match his intentions.

He clarified Thursday afternoon opening local operations should be a process coordinated with county health officials.

But while his letter, indeed, calls for opening “in a safe and productive manner,” Crider also wrote his encouragement to Walla Walla County commissioners to join Benton and Franklin counties in opening.

Commissioners for the latter county earlier this week voted to “end recognition”



Crider

DeBolt

of Gov. Jay Inslee’s stay-at-home order designed to slow the spread of COVID-19. In a special meeting Thursday, the three-member commission rolled back their resolution in a split vote.

Crider’s letter was jaw-dropping for many who voiced concern as Walla Walla County’s COVID-19 infection numbers continue to climb. Some said they no longer supported Crider and others said he should follow his previous statement on other matters: “We don’t get to pick and choose the laws we follow.”

Crider said on Thursday that businesses, such as landscaping and construction firms, ought to open since workers don’t have to be in proximity of each other.

“I’m not talking about wholesale, everybody can go back to work,” he said.

But Liz Jessee, county emergency management

director and acting public information officer for the Walla Walla County Department of Community Health, discouraged any businesses from reopening with the county’s infection rate still rising. As of Thursday afternoon, the county had 51 positive cases confirmed. Fifteen of those are people who have recovered. But the number of cases has doubled over the last week alone.

Meghan DeBolt, Walla Walla County Department of Community Health director, said about two weeks are needed to ensure her team is ready for a possible onslaught of cases. That includes adding a nurse next week, she said.

“I’m just as eager to get things running,” DeBolt said.

But that means having guidelines in place for how it happens safely, she said.

Crider’s suggestion of landscaping and construction businesses opening could work in a few weeks, she said, as long as the stores those businesses rely upon, such as Home Depot, could work safely.

She reinforced Inslee’s idea that solutions to “dial back quickly” are needed.

BRIEFLY

Yakima Police investigate fatal stabbing

YAKIMA, Wash. — A police investigation is ongoing in Yakima after a man was fatally stabbed earlier this week, authorities said.

The Yakima Police Department found Francis M. Gallagher, 73, on Wednesday around 9 p.m. with multiple stab wounds, the *Yakima Herald-Republic* reported.

Officers performed first aid on Gallagher and transported him to a local hospital where he later died, police said.

Detectives are interviewing people who may have been in Gallagher’s apartment when the stabbing occurred, Capt. Jay Seely said.

Anyone with information is urged to call the Yakima Police Department. Tips can also

be submitted online.

Enterprise mayor to step down May 11

ENTERPRISE — Mayor Stacey Karvoski will step down from her post and the Enterprise City Council will appoint one of its members to be mayor pro-tem at its May 11 meeting. The appointment will be effective June 1.

Karvoski said she is stepping down because she’s moving outside city limits and no longer meets the residency requirement to serve as an elected official for the city.

Karvoski joined the city council in January 2009. She was elected mayor in 2016 and took office in January 2017.

— EO Media Group and Associated Press

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.

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