

Hundreds of Washington health care workers sickened by coronavirus

By MARTHA BELLISLE
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Hundreds of health care workers and dozens of first responders in Washington state have become sick with the coronavirus while on the job, according to workers' compensation claims.

The new data provides some insight into how the coronavirus has impacted the health care community, but underestimates how many doctors and nurses have tested positive for the disease. That number is not known because state and federal health officials have failed to collect the information, and they've made no improvements since The Associated Press first reported the problem in April.

"Our data on occupations are not complete, so we do not report the information since it would not be reliable," said Annie Johnson, a spokeswoman for the Washington health department's Joint Information Center.

Washington is not alone. States that reported coronavirus cases to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention only included occupational information for 16% of all reported cases, the agency said in a new report.



A medical assistant prepares to take a swab from a patient at a new drive-thru and walk-up coronavirus testing site in Seattle.

Experts say knowing how COVID-19 is impacting front-line workers in the health care system is vital in handling the crisis.

"It is important to have this information — not only whether or not a case was a health care worker, but also whether or not we believe they were exposed treating patients, or were infected in their community," said Eric Lofgren, an infectious disease epidemiologist at Washington

State University.

"Both are critical not only for understanding how hard hit health care workers are, but where we need to be taking stronger measures to protect them."

Most people get the disease through close contact with someone who is infected, the CDC said in another report.

"Health care workers are not only at higher risk of infection, but can also amplify outbreaks within

health care facilities if they become ill," the report said. "Identifying and managing HCWs who have been exposed to a patient with COVID-19 is of great importance in preventing health care transmission and protecting staff and vulnerable patients in health care settings."

The first reported case of coronavirus hit the U.S. on Jan. 21 when a man in the Seattle area tested positive for the disease. Another

man near Seattle was initially thought to be the first death in the country on Feb. 29. In the months that followed, more than 15,185 Washingtonians have tested positive and at least 834 people 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.

As of one week ago, 806 people in Washington had filed workers' compensation claims related to COVID-19, according to Tim Church, a spokesman for the Department of Labor & Industries. Of those claims, 636 were made by health care workers and 37 were first responders, Church said.

Some of the health care claims may include people who are not nurses or doctors, but could be someone who was exposed while cleaning a room of a coronavirus patient, he said.

Nationwide, information is limited on the number of doctors and nurses who have been sickened by COVID-19, according to a recent report by the CDC. The agency received

reports of 315,531 cases of COVID-19 between Feb. 12 to April 9, and was only able to identify 9,282 as health care workers because states didn't include job information on their forms.

But of the 12 states that sent more complete data, health care workers made up 11% of the total positive cases.

Most of the workers who tested positive said they had contact with COVID-19 patients in health care settings, while some were exposed to the virus in the community or homes, the report said.

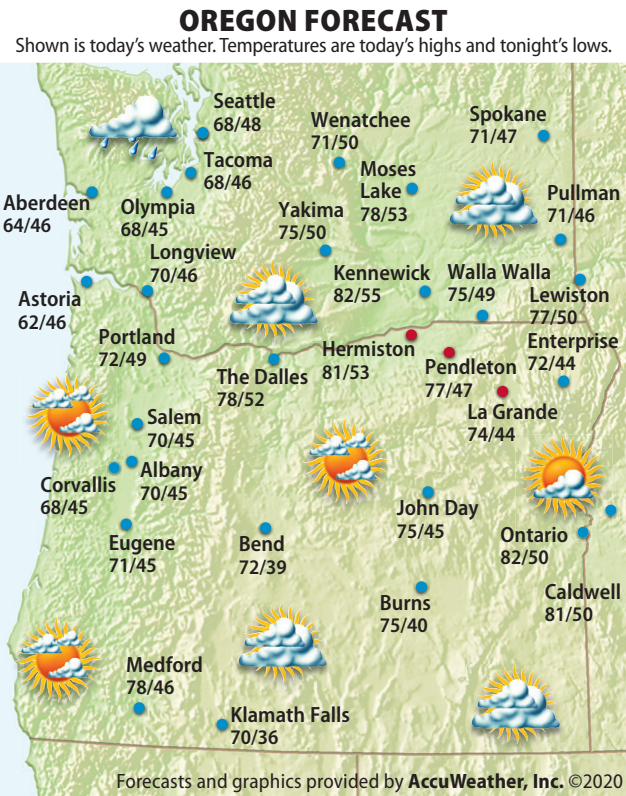
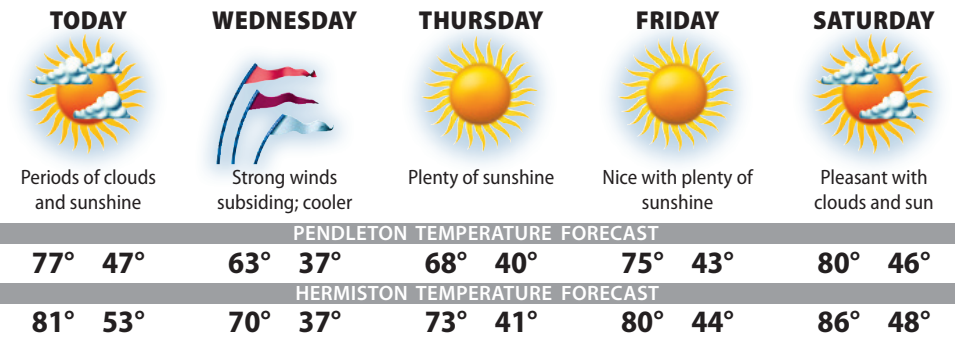
Although 92% of those workers reported having at least one symptom, 8% didn't report any symptoms, the report said.

The CDC was able to identify 27 health care workers who died from COVID-19. Reports of deaths of nurses and doctors collected by medical groups have identified more.

The CDC said it's critical to ensure the health and safety of health care professionals at work and in the community.

"Improving surveillance through routine reporting of occupation and industry not only benefits HCP, but all workers during the COVID-19 pandemic," the CDC said.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	72°	34°
Normals	68°	43°
Records	92° (1966)	22° (1897)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.14"
Normal month to date	0.13"
Year to date	5.30"
Last year to date	7.76"
Normal year to date	5.28"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	73°	32°
Normals	70°	43°
Records	90° (1966)	29° (2011)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	0.05"
Normal month to date	0.16"
Year to date	0.56"
Last year to date	3.88"
Normal year to date	4.18"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Wed.
Boardman	SSW 4-8	WSW 12-25
Pendleton	NNW 6-12	W 12-25

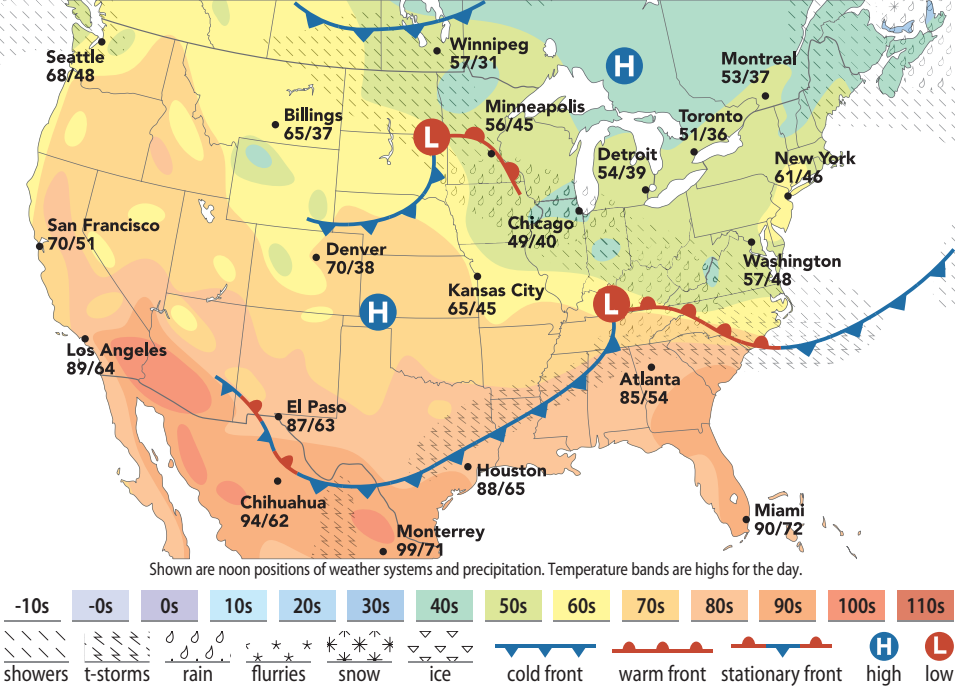
SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	5:37 a.m.
Sunset tonight	8:08 p.m.
Moonrise today	6:08 p.m.
Moonset today	5:03 a.m.

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 108° in Frederick, Okla. Low 12° in Bodie State Park, Calif.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Testing at Tyson plant finds that nearly 1 in 8 sick with COVID-19

By ANNETTE CARY
Tri-City Herald

WALLULA, Wash. — Some 144 workers at the Tyson Fresh Meats plant near the Tri-Cities have tested positive for COVID-19 in testing done at the plant in recent days, and a second worker there may have died.

With 1,236 test results released by Saturday, the percentage of positive results was just under 12%.

That means nearly one in eight workers at the plant were infected with the new coronavirus as testing started April 24.

The Benton Franklin Health District on Saturday reported two deaths in county residents associated with food processing plants, with the Tyson plant the only one nearby with a known outbreak.

No further information was available on the weekend.

A 60-year-old Pasco butcher, who worked at the plant, died April 20.

Tyson closed the plant

when testing began and a decision on when it will reopen has not been announced.

Results for just 22 workers are pending after the Walla Walla County Department of Community Health required all people working at the beef processing plant in Wallula to be tested.

Tyson workers were falling ill through April, with 104 COVID-19 cases linked to the outbreak in residents of four counties — Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla and Umatilla — just before testing of workers at the plant began.

More cases were reported before results started to come back from testing at the plant.

Walla Walla County officials released the results of 636 tests on Saturday, with just 28 positive cases among those results. That compared with 116 positive cases in the first 600 test results released Thursday and Friday.

Walla Walla County officials on Saturday did not release information on

where workers with positive tests lived, other than 15 workers who lived in Walla Walla County.

However, the majority of workers at the Tyson beef slaughter and packing plant at Wallula south of Pasco live in the Tri-Cities area.

The Benton Franklin Health District has said 147 residents of the two counties have had COVID-19 linked to the outbreak at the Wallula beef plant, with most of those cases reported before testing results at the plant were received.

The health district said Saturday that it was continuing to verify which of the positive cases from the testing are from Tri-Cities.

As workers were tested at the plant they were sent home to self-isolate until they received results of their tests.

Employees who tested negative are eligible to return to work when the plant reopens. Those testing positive must be symptom-free for seven days before going back to work.

BRIEFLY

Baker County ends camping ban on Snake

BAKER CITY — Baker County's ban on camping and other overnight activities along the Snake River corridor at the county's eastern border, in effect since April 3, ended last week.

County commissioners instituted the ban on overnight recreation, including fishing, after receiving numerous complaints that visitors, most from outside Oregon, had been congregating along the river, and failing to comply with social distancing guidelines.

County officials remind visitors to continue to

maintain social distancing and properly dispose of all waste.

Developed recreation sites remain closed on public land managed by the Forest Service and BLM, although public land itself is open. Visit www.bakercountycovid19.com for links to information about restrictions or closures.

Women dressed as nurses steal from Kennewick porches

KENNEWICK, Wash. — Two women dressed like health care workers grabbed items from Kennewick porches.

The *Tri-City Herald* reports the women donned dark blue scrubs, the com-

fortable clothing worn by nurses and doctors, and a lanyard before sneaking up to porches and taking deliveries, Kennewick police said on Facebook.

They were caught on camera working together and driving a maroon four-door car. One of the women also was wearing gloves.

"Both appear to dress as nurses, and we do not believe they are actual nurses," Kennewick police said. "The nurses we are fortunate to know only give their time, lives and take the vitals of their patients (not their property)."

Anyone with information about the thieves is asked to call Kennewick police.

—EO Media Group and Associated Press

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