

Vaccines required for employees at Providence health system

By SHEILA HAGAR
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA — Providence St. Mary Medical Center and Providence Medical Group officials announced Thursday, Aug. 5, that caregivers employed by the organizations must be vaccinated against COVID-19 by Sept. 30.

The announcement follows the statement earlier this week from the Washington State Hospital Association supporting COVID-19 vaccination requirements for health care workers.

St. Mary spokesperson Kathleen Obenland said the mandate is for all Providence caregivers in Washington, including Walla Walla.

Patient care employees will be required to show proof of vaccination. Those who cannot be vaccinated must sign a declaration of that and follow additional protocols, including enhanced COVID-19 testing, mandatory vaccine-related education and discussions, as well as other infection-prevention requirements in accordance with facility policy, federal, state and local public health mandates.

Indoor masking also remains in effect in Providence hospitals and clinics.

Providence is one of the largest health systems in the nation. The move comes as the organization is seeing the delta variant driving patient volumes up once again and unvaccinated people accounting for the vast majority of Providence's COVID-19 patients.



Walla Walla Union Bulletin, File

Pharmacists, from left, Amanda Johnson, Belinda Grimm and Dalari Allington of Providence St. Mary Medical Center, Walla Walla, prepare the COVID-19 vaccine for injection in January 2021.

In Walla Walla, the renewed surge in the virus is making it more likely patients with illnesses and injuries will be transferred to other hospitals, "if there are any with capacity," Obenland said. "Particularly if the patient needs an intensive care bed."

That can make a medical situation extraordinarily expensive for patients, but sometimes there is no

other available option than to transfer elsewhere, she said.

While the hospital's Southgate Medical Park is set up as an overflow space for COVID-19 patients, it only will be used as a last resort. For example, if St. Mary could not contain any more patients, it couldn't transfer patients out because other hospitals also were at capacity and if it appeared the situation would continue for a

prolonged period of time, she said.

Obenland said there are multiple reasons for the policy, especially staffing issues.

"The challenge is not just about available beds. It's about the team of health care professionals needed to staff those beds. Staffing at St. Mary is very tight, and, like most other businesses, we are facing recruitment challenges."

With nearly every other hospital

in the nation experiencing the same shortages, it would not be possible to rapidly hire a whole new team, and putting employees at Southgate would require St. Mary to pause numerous medical services to free up staff, pull in clinic employees and undertake other measures to create a care team for the Southgate beds, Obenland explained.

Dr. Rod Hochman, president and CEO of Providence, said that until vaccinations reach critical mass in the United States, "we will continue to see ongoing outbreaks that put the most vulnerable members of our communities at greater risk. Having been on the front lines since the beginning, we know this is not sustainable for our communities or our caregivers."

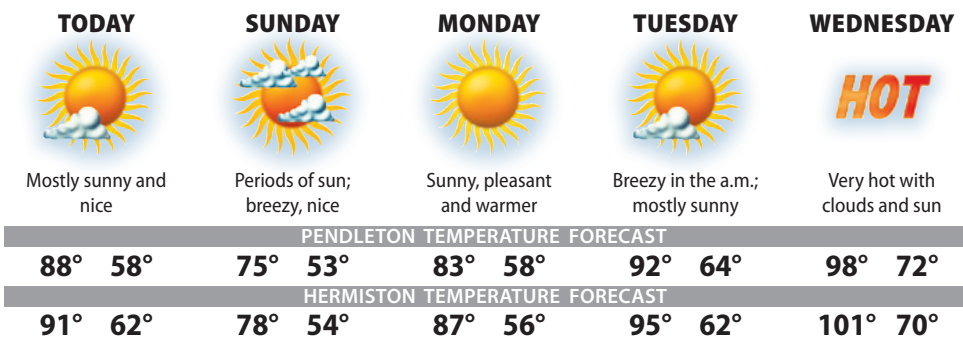
"We also know the COVID-19 vaccines remain one of the safest, most effective tools for preventing severe illness from the virus."

As one of the largest health systems in the country, Providence has the opportunity to lead by example, Hochman said.

"That is why it's imperative that every caregiver get vaccinated against COVID-19. Not only will it help us keep each other and our patients safe, it will also help ensure we are doing our part to put the pandemic behind us," Hochman said.

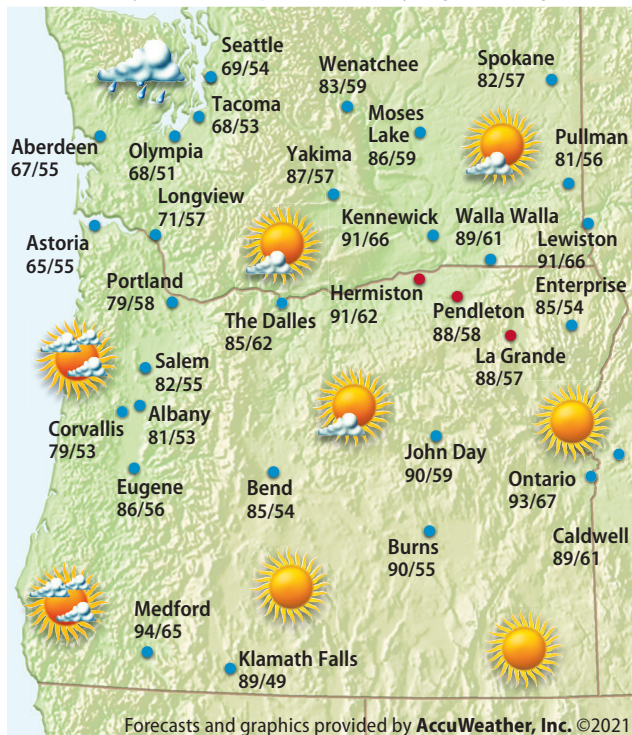
Providence is placing a moratorium on large, indoor gatherings and non-essential business travel until the organization has a better understanding of the latest wave of COVID-19, officials also said.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

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



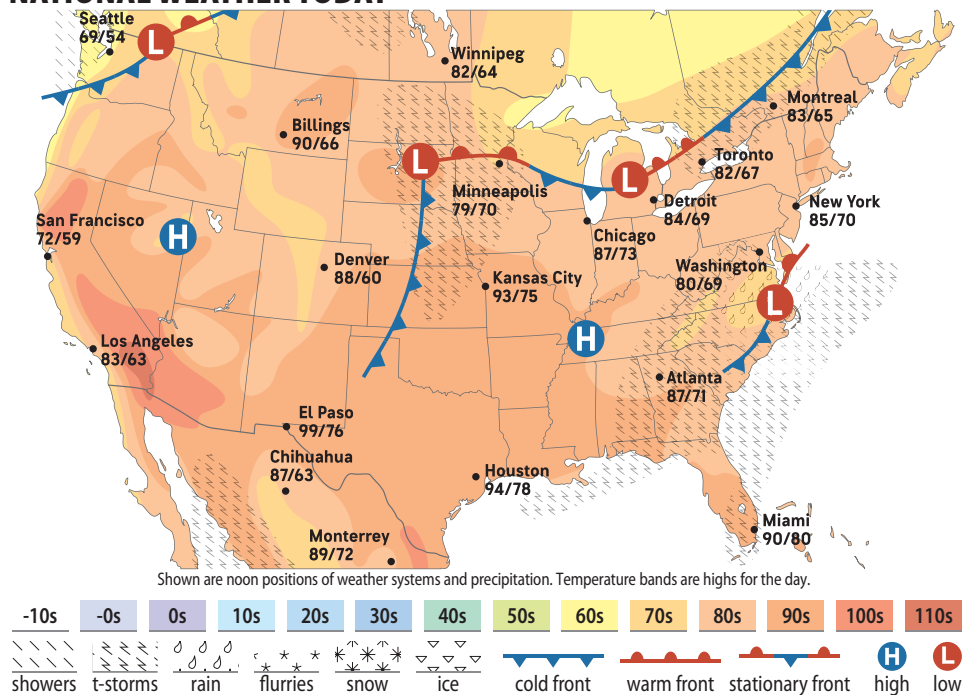
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	87°	67°	
Normals	91°	60°	
Records	108° (1905)	36° (1909)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace		
Month to date	0.01"		
Normal month to date	0.06"		
Year to date	4.37"		
Last year to date	8.68"		
Normal year to date	8.37"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	90°	69°	
Normals	94°	59°	
Records	103° (2019)	46° (1969)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.00"		
Normal month to date	0.03"		
Year to date	1.93"		
Last year to date	1.66"		
Normal year to date	5.17"		
WINDS (in mph)			
	Today	Sun.	
Boardman	WSW 8-16	W 8-16	
Pendleton	W 7-14	WSW 10-20	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	5:46 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	8:15 p.m.		
Moonrise today	4:25 a.m.		
Moonset today	8:21 p.m.		

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 112° in Needles, Calif. Low 34° in Mammoth Lakes, Calif.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



County commissioners reopen Mount Emily Recreation Area

By DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — All-terrain vehicles are again rolling at the Mount Emily Recreation Area.

ATVs are reappearing at MERA after the Union County Board of Commissioners voted Wednesday, Aug. 4, to open its improved roads and its motocross track immediately to motor vehicles. MERA had been closed since July 21 because of high fire danger due to drought and hot weather.

The roads opened are Road 201, known as Mainline; Road 202-Mount Emily Road; Road 203-Highline Road and Road 208-Easy Out Road. These are all rough dirt and gravel roads with no flammable vegetation. Everyone taking a vehicle on these roads must have an ATV permit. Only

people with four-wheel drive vehicles with high road clearance should use these roads because they are so rough, said Sean Chambers, Union County's parks coordinator.

Anyone driving on these roads must carry water and a shovel because of Oregon Department of Forestry fire rules.

The motocross trail now open again is near Fox Hill Road and is for motorcycles. All motorcycles using this trail also must carry a shovel and have water close by, Chambers said.

The Aug. 4 action by the commissioners was the second move toward fully reopening MERA after the July vote that completely

closed it. MERA was reopened for nonmotorized activities on July 28.

Significant fire restrictions still are in place at MERA where no camping or smoking is allowed.

The continuing reopening of MERA reflects the increasing moisture the Grande Ronde Valley has received in recent weeks and cooler temperatures. It also reflects a recent increase in available wildfire fighting equipment, according to Union County Commissioner Donna Beverage.

Beverage said a number of firefighting vehicles belonging to Union County fire departments had been out of the county fighting fires but have since returned.



Beverage



Scarfo

IN BRIEF

Local Oregon Trail Segment honored

LA GRANDE — The National Park Service recently inducted the La Grande to Hilgard segment of the Oregon Trail into the National Register of Historic Places.

The trail segment was one of two local nominations submitted in late June by the Oregon State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation. The other nomination was a document detailing the history of the Oregon trail and instructions for future national historic nominations along the Oregon Trail.

The committee had been working on the nomination for the trail segment since 2018, according to Robert Olguin, National Register program coordinator for the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

However, the segment nomination could not be submitted until the document also was completed, which had been in the works since 2012.

"There's a few reasons it took so long,"

Olguin said. "There has been staffing issues, with turnover, and there's no specific timeline for submitting these. And also, several times, the National Park Service would get a draft and send it back for revisions."

The La Grande to Hilgard trail segment, which extends for 3.6 miles, is one section of the Oregon Trail that still has physical evidence of the original trail. The trail follows a stream before reaching a steep incline, one of the steepest sections of the trail in Oregon, according to a statement from the Oregon Parks and Rec department.

The trail originally was used by passenger stagecoaches and freighters carrying mining equipment, food and agricultural materials and other commodities, the statement said.

The National Register of Historic Places recognizes sites that "identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources," according to its website. There are more than 95,000 individual listings on the register's database.

—EO Media Group

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
In the App Store:
EO
East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, 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 © 2021, EO Media Group

Circulation Dept.
For mail delivery, online access, vacation stops or delivery concerns call 800-781-3214

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Local home delivery	Savings (cover price)
EZPay	\$10.75/month	50 percent
52 weeks	\$135	42 percent
26 weeks	\$71	39 percent
13 weeks	\$37	36 percent

Single copy price:
\$1.50 Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

ADVERTISING

Regional Sales Director (Eastside) EO Media Group:

- Karrine Brogotti
541-963-3161 • kbrogotti@eomediagroup.com
- Multimedia Consultants:
541-564-4531
Audra Workman
541-564-4538 • aworkman@eastoregonian.com
- Business Office**
Dayle Stinson
541-966-0824 • dstinson@eastoregonian.com

Classified & Legal Advertising
Classified advertising: 541-564-4538
Legal advertising: 541-966-0824
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 or Amy Velho at 541-966-0818.
- To submit engagements, weddings and anniversaries: email rstruthers@eastoregonian.com or visit eastoregonian.com/community/announcements
- To submit sports or outdoors information or tips: 541-966-0838 • sports@eastoregonian.com

COMMERCIAL PRINTING
Commercial Print Manager: Holly Rouska
541-617-7839 • hrouska@eomediagroup.com