

# Local & State

## Oregon Responds To Coronavirus Crisis

# State to set up temporary mobile hospital in Salem

■ The 250-bed hospital will free up beds across the state for coronavirus patients

By Dick Hughes

For the Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon is erecting a 250-bed temporary hospital in Salem to free up other hospital beds around the state for coronavirus patients.

The Oregon Medical Station is a mobile emergency hospital that the state purchased several years ago in case of a health crisis. Gov. Kate Brown said the facility, which is being set up at the Oregon State Fairgrounds, should be operational by Friday.

The state's overriding goal is to slow the progression of COVID-19, so as not to overwhelm Oregon's health care system. Brown and other state officials said that is why restaurants, bars, schools and all large events have been closed.

"All the things we've been trying to do, as grievously hard as they are for the economy, are single-mindedly aimed at the notion of making sure we don't run out of hospital capacity," Pat Allen, the director of the Oregon Health Authority, told the Legislature's Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response on Wednesday.

"This is a situation that will not last for weeks. This will last for months and potentially a lot of months," Allen said.

Along with setting up the temporary hospital in Salem, officials want existing hospitals to create 1,000 temporary



Capital Press file photo

The Jackman-Long Building at the Oregon State Fair and Exposition Center is the site of an emergency hospital being built by the state.

beds statewide. Officials also are exploring whether hotel, college dorm rooms or other places could be used.

"Are there facilities we can literally stand up in parking lots?" Allen said.

These would be "stepdown" facilities, requiring fewer traditional medical staff. Allen said they could serve patients who normally would be released from hospitals into nursing homes and other care facilities, which now have been closed to the public; less-sick patients who otherwise would be sent to regular hospitals; and homeless individuals and others who no longer require hospitalization but cannot continue their recovery at home.

Retired health professionals and others with medical training could be tapped to help staff these facilities.

"The idea is to basically within the next three to four

weeks stand up as much of that kind of collection of care as we possibly can," Allen said.

Current statistics suggest about 20% of COVID-19 cases require significant medical intervention, though including 5% to 8% who must be cared for in ICUs, he said.

The number of cases is accelerating. As of Wednesday morning, 75 cases had been reported so far this year, up from 39 on Sunday. Forty-seven of those 75 cases were in people age 55 or older. Nineteen were among people aged 35-54.

Cases have been identified in 14 of Oregon's 36 counties, but the number will grow as testing expands.

Multnomah and Linn counties operated drive-through testing centers in response to localized outbreaks, but Allen said that is impractical on a statewide basis due to the

*"All the things we've been trying to do, as grievously hard as they are for the economy, are single-mindedly aimed at the notion of making sure we don't run out of hospital capacity."*

— Pat Allen, director, Oregon Health Authority

lack of medical personnel and supplies. However, the state is contracting with private labs to run tests in addition to the state medical lab. Some health providers are testing patients as needed.

Allen explained that disease outbreaks follow a bell curve. Cases unfold slowly at first and then spike up before declining, which is why Oregon officials talk of "flattening the curve" — reducing the overall spike in cases. The goal is to decrease the impact on the health care system at any one time, although it could extend the overall length of the outbreak.

Without such action, Allen said, the exponentially increasing cases of severe COVID-19 will quickly exceed the capacity of overall hospital beds in Oregon, beds in intensive care units, ventilators and skilled medical staff.

If that happens, Allen told legislators, hard decisions will have to be made about who gets care and who doesn't.

## MEALS

Continued from Page 1A

"We're a social environment," Brown said. "Our whole business is built on people being social and going out to eat and visit with friends. We can't just become a takeout restaurant. We're not designed for that."

He is offering the takeout service — as are many restaurants in Baker City and elsewhere — for a couple of reasons.

First, Brown is supplying free meals to people who have lost their job due to the restaurant and bar restrictions.

Brown said about 32% of the meals prepared Wednesday were donated to people who have been laid off.

He also gave people 21 and older a free growler of beer, although starting Thursday he had a small charge for that.

Second, he's using the money collected from paying customers to create a "Pay It Forward Fund" that will help his own and other employees affected by the pandemic.

"We feel for this whole industry," Brown said. "We're trying to stay positive. But it's out of our hands."

Brown said customers have been supportive and gracious.

"People have been tipping outrageously," he said. "I think they're just happy that we're trying to do something."

According to the Oregon Employment Department, "food service and drinking establishments" employ about 500 people in Baker County — about 11% of all private jobs in the county.

Brown said adding a temporary takeout service at

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— Tyler Brown, owner of Barley Brown's Brew Pub and Tasting Room

Sumpter Junction wasn't feasible, mainly because there are several fast food restaurants nearby that already have drive-throughs.

He said employees brought food from Sumpter Junction to Barley Brown's for preparation in takeout meals. He also donated some of the food to employees from both restaurants who have been laid off. Total employment among his family's establishments has dropped from 45 to about 10, Brown said.

He said cooks at the pub are being creative in tailoring the takeout menu items based on the food that needs to be used — meat and fresh produce from Sumpter Junction, for instance.

Although Baker County's visitor industry peaks during the summer, Brown said March is typically his busiest month of the spring due in part to spring vacation.

As a result, both the pub and Sumpter Junction had relatively large amounts of food stocked in anticipation.

Had the governor given even a few days of advance notice before imposing the restrictions on restaurants and bars, Brown said he could have cut back on his orders.

On the brewing side — Barley Brown has won more than 80 awards for its beers since opening 22 years ago — Brown said he has temporarily suspended brewing. Workers are focusing on deferred maintenance such

as pumps and hoses, along with managing the beer that's already been brewed.

The issue is simple.

With bars mainly shut down statewide, Brown's concerned about whether he'll even be able to sell the beer that's fermenting or has already been transferred to kegs — about 800 kegs in total at the brewery, which is in the same building as the Tap Room.

About 70% of Barley Brown's beer goes to Portland — an average of about 150 kegs per week, Brown said.

Unlike many craft breweries, Barley Brown's beer is available on draft only — it's not bottled for sale in grocery and convenience stores.

That has been advantageous to Barley Brown's as its beers — in particular its Pallet Jack IPA — have gained a reputation across Oregon and beyond the state's borders.

"We've carved out a really good niche that way," Brown said.

But that niche is no help now because customers have very limited access to Barley Brown's beer.

Brown is also worried about the length of the restaurant and bar restrictions because beer is perishable.

Although some stouts can last for two or three years if stored properly, Barley Brown's most popular and highest-volume beers, including Pallet Jack, generally are

good for 90 to 110 days.

"If this lasts for 90 days, most of the beer in stock will be out of date," Brown said. "That's what we're up against."

Conversely, brewers can't rapidly respond to a sudden resurgence in demand.

It takes 21 days to produce a batch of Pallet Jack that's ready to serve, Brown said.

"We can't just turn the volume up," he said.

He's concerned that even when the governor lifts the restrictions, demand for beer won't rise quickly because some bars won't survive the closure.

"I think that's the biggest concern," Brown said.

He's not sure whether the pub will continue to offer a limited takeout menu after the current food stocks are depleted. The decision will depend in part on whether employees are comfortable continuing the service.

The situation is inherently unpredictable because there's nothing to compare it to, Brown said.

"Nobody had a plan for a pandemic," he said. "The only comparable thing probably is Prohibition."

# Baker County Jail makes changes due to coronavirus

By Chris Collins

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Sheriff Travis Ash has implemented changes in the way prisoners are lodged at the Baker County Jail because of the coronavirus pandemic taking place throughout the state and the nation.

Although there have been no reports of anyone testing positive for the coronavirus Covid-19 in Baker County, Ash said his strategy is designed to keep the disease from entering the building.

"This jail (which opened in 1991) is old," Ash said. "All air is shared."

Because there is no way to isolate an inmate who might be ill with the virus, Ash said his plan is designed to keep illness out of the building, which in addition to the jail, houses the Sheriff's Department and the 9-1-1 Dispatch Center.

"The Dispatch Center is critical for the county," Ash said. "We're trying to preserve the building as much as we can."

The jail holds 45 prisoners, but there were just 22 in custody Wednesday. That extra space provides another layer of protection for the inmates and jail staff, Ash said.

Patrol deputies, who spend most of their time out in the field, come into the office as needed.

His employees self-report any illness and stay home if they are not well.

"We are still operating as normal, but we're trying to limit the number of people coming and going," Ash said.

Another change in policy calls for city, county and state police officers to only take into custody those who are required by law to be lodged at the jail. All others will be cited and released and given a date to appear in court.

Mandatory arrests would include suspects accused of domestic violence crimes, stalking, violating restraining orders, and failure to appear and no-bail warrants. Suspects in all Ballot Measure 11 crimes, such as murder, rape and robbery, also are required to be taken into custody. The Ballot Measure 11 crimes carry mandatory minimum prison terms upon conviction.

During normal times Baker County law enforcement officers place people accused of misdemeanor crimes in jail, unlike larger jurisdictions that don't have the space, Ash said.

"We are unique," he said. "We have room and we do house low-level misdemeanors."

The reduction in people being taken into custody also coincides with a paring down of court hearings and trials in Baker County Circuit Court, Ash said.

Other steps taken to maintain a healthy environment at the jail include canceling all visitations, work release and work crew outings, Ash said.

The front door at the Sheriff's Department has been closed and service to the public such as civil process work and fingerprinting will be conducted by appointment only.

More information is available by calling the Sheriff's Office at 541-523-6415.



Ash

# Brown wants extension on REAL ID Act

SALEM (AP) — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said Friday that during the coronavirus outbreak she wants a statewide eviction moratorium, to suspend enforcement on expired automobile tabs and driver licenses and has asked the federal government for a one-year extension for compliance to the REAL ID act.

She also said during a media briefing that she was not at this time enacting more stringent social distancing requirements like those imposed by California and New York this week. Brown has already ordered a six-week statewide school closure, a ban on gatherings of more than 25 people and shutdown of bar and restaurant operations other than takeout and delivery for at least four weeks.

Brown did, however, say she was evaluating the situation daily.

"For me the bottom line is that if there is evidence that Oregonians are not complying with the aggressive measures in place I will have to take more aggressive action," she said. "I am encouraging and urging Oregonians to stay home. I want to say don't travel for spring break, stay home."

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