

# RISK LEVEL

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The move to high risk restricts restaurants, bars, fitness centers and theaters to 25% of indoor capacity, or a maximum of 50 people, including employees, whichever is fewer.

Under the lowest risk level, those businesses have a capacity of 50%.

The county would have qualified to move to the extreme risk level starting April 9 based on the 79 new cases recorded between March 21-April 3. The threshold for extreme risk level was 60 new cases during a two-week period.

But in March the governor announced a change to the risk level system that allowed some counties, including Baker, to remain at the lowest risk level for an additional two-week "caution period."

That caution period was April 3-17.

Baker County recorded 79

# Free Drive-Thru Vaccination Clinic Saturday

The Baker County Health Department has scheduled a free drive-thru COVID-19 vaccination clinic, for ages 18 and older, this Saturday, April 24, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Baker County Fairgrounds, 2600 East St. The Health Department will have about 1,000 first doses of the Moderna vaccine. No registration is necessary, but you can fill out forms at [www.baker-countycovid19.com](http://www.baker-countycovid19.com).

That website also has a map showing where people should enter the Fairgrounds Saturday.

more new cases over the two weeks.

But the governor also decided that no county would move

to the extreme risk — which prohibits indoor dining in restaurants and bars, among other restrictions — so long as there are fewer than 300 people being treated in hospitals for COVID-19 statewide. As of Tuesday, there were 255 COVID patients being treated in hospitals across the state.

That means Baker County will move to high risk rather than extreme on Friday.

Brown said 11 of Oregon's 36 counties, including Baker, would previously have moved to extreme risk but for the addition of the statewide hospitalization threshold.

Among the effects on local businesses and events when Baker County moves from lowest to high risk:

## Restaurants, bars, theaters and indoor gyms and fitness centers, and swimming pools

The current limit of 50% capacity goes to 25% of capacity or 50 total people, including employees, whichever is

fewer. Restaurants, bars and theaters must close at 11 p.m., instead of the current midnight.

Terry McQuisten, owner of the Eltrym Theater, said the move to high risk will require only a slight reduction in capacity at Baker County's only moviehouse.

"We were already limiting our admissions more than was required, so it won't be too bad," McQuisten said.

The Eltrym, which closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic and reopened for about two months last fall before closing again when the state tightened restrictions in mid-November, reopened on March 5.

McQuisten said she planned to limit ticket sales to 30% or 40% of capacity for each of the Eltrym's three screens to ensure enough space between patrons inside the theater spaces.

Tyler Brown, who owns Barley Brown's Brew Pub and Tap House, separate

restaurants on Main Street, said the restriction to 25% of capacity won't have a major effect on the number of diners in the pub because to comply with the 6-foot social distancing requirement, he's already had to remove tables, limiting the capacity.

The biggest challenge with the 50-person limit, based on his experience with that limit this winter, is that in some cases customers who are waiting for a table have to wait outside to avoid exceeding the limit.

"That's the biggest struggle we've had," Brown said.

## Retail stores, including grocery stores

The current limit of 75% of capacity drops to 50%.

## Outdoor recreation, including K-12 sports

The current limit of 300 people drops to 75.

Buell Gonzales Jr., athletic director for the Baker School District, said the reduced capacity will require the district to impose more limits on spectators, and visiting teams won't be allowed to have fans.

Lisa Britton of the Baker City Herald contributed to this story.

# BESSIE

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Wilson wants to grow the herd around Baker City, but the project depends on more fundraising. She's also looking for a source of metal cow sculptures.

Anyone who would like to support the project can take a donation to Baker City Hall and specify it is for Public Arts Commission's cow project.

For more information, contact Robin Nudd at City Hall or email her at [rnudd@bakercity.com](mailto:rnudd@bakercity.com).

Other Public Arts Commission projects

include more vinyl wrap decorations on utility boxes around town, and installing an art sculpture by Shawn Peterson outside of Royal Artisan.

To learn more about the Commission's mission and projects, go to [bakercity.com](http://bakercity.com). Under "Government," click on "Public Arts Commission."

# RAIN

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A storm will move from the Pacific Ocean into Oregon with widespread rain showers, snow in the mountains, and cooler temperatures, Breidenbach said.

"The pattern looks like it's finally going to break down a little bit this weekend," he said. "It's not a big storm, but it should bring some moisture."

A National Weather Service model forecast calls for about 0.21 of an inch of rain in Baker City from Saturday through Monday.

That's more rain than has fallen here since late February. The March total at the airport was 0.14. It was the second-driest March at the airport since at least 1943, the first year for which records are available. The driest March was 1969, with a total of 0.13.

Both March and April average about 0.80 of an inch of rain.

The driest April was 2020, with a rainfall total of 0.20.

The dry spring has been a surprise, Breidenbach said. With relatively colder surface water in parts of the Pacific Ocean — what's known as a La Nina pattern — weather typically is wetter and cooler than average in the Northwest, he said. "Except for February it didn't work out that way," Breidenbach said.

Although cold fronts have frequently swept through the region since early March, the storms contained little if any precipitation.

The reason, Breidenbach said, is that the winds in the upper atmosphere, which in effect "steer" storms, have

been from the north and northwest, meaning the storms travel not over the Pacific, an obviously ample source of moisture, but over land.

Storms that originate over land are much less likely to bring precipitation to Eastern Oregon and Idaho, Breidenbach said.

This weekend's storm, by contrast, is the first in more than a month that will blow across a long fetch of the ocean, allowing it to entrain enough moisture to deliver rain and mountain snow far inland, he said.

The recent dry stretch, combined with Phillips Reservoir being well below its capacity, prompted the Baker County Board of Commissioners to approve a drought emergency declara-

tion on April 7.

Although the mountain snowpack is above average, much of Baker County is in a moderate or severe drought as of April 13, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

Baker Valley is in extreme drought, the second-highest of the four levels behind only exceptional drought.

Typically the wettest period in Baker County is May and June.

May ranks as the wettest month at the Baker City Airport, with an average rainfall of 1.43 inches, and June ranks second with an average of 1.28 inches.

Those are the only two months with an average rainfall of more than one inch. The yearly average at the airport is about 10 inches.

# OBITUARIES

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## Eugene Meier

North Powder, 1972-2021

Eugene was the best kind of friend you could ask for, and he was generous and kind to a fault. He made friends easily, and he loved bonding with others that shared his same interests from fishing, hunting, cars, camping, and so much more. He was just fun to be around most of the time. We are so

thankful for the outpouring of love and support and the many condolences we have received from friends, family, and the community, his family said.

Eugene is survived by his daughter, Stormy Hampton; his mother, Sung Meier; his brother, Doug Meier; and his sisters Min Meier, Kim Stander and Tai McClure.

Eugene was preceded in death by his father, Joseph Meier Jr.; his paternal grandparents, Joseph and Lillian Meier; and his maternal

grandparents, Sook Ho and Ok Hyun Kim.

For those who would like to make a donation in memory of Eugene, the family suggests Hunt of a Lifetime through Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services, P.O. Box 543, Halfway, OR 97834. Online condolences can be made at [www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com](http://www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com).

# NEWS OF RECORD

## FUNERALS PENDING

### Arlene Mae Schoorl:

There will be a public celebration of Arlene's life, with a potluck, on Saturday, April 24, from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Unity Community Hall. To offer online condolences, go to [www.grayswestco.com](http://www.grayswestco.com)

**Ron Mayo:** Graveside service with military honors, May 1 at 1 p.m. at the Pine Haven Cemetery in Halfway. Friends are invited to join the family for a reception immediately following at the VFW Hall. Donations in Ron's memory can be made to the VFW Post 7847 through Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services, P.O. Box 543, Halfway, OR 97834. Online condolences can be made at [www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com](http://www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com).

## POLICE LOG

**Baker City Police**  
FAILURE TO APPEAR  
(Baker County Circuit Court warrant):

**Baker Co. Sheriff's Office**  
FAILURE TO APPEAR  
(Union County Circuit Court warrant): Kirk William Roberts, 57, Baker City, 10:45 a.m. Monday, April 19 in the 3400 block of 13th Street; cited and released.

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Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald

Fire damaged a Baker City home Wednesday, April 21.

# FIRE

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He said it might be possible to rebuild the main part of the house, which has multiple additions.

Lee said investigators for the Baker City Fire Department and the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office were looking for the cause of the fire in the laundry room, which contained a washer and dryer, water heater and heater. The home had a natural gas line as well as electricity.

Lee said the American Red Cross was helping the family with housing and

other immediate needs.

Both paid and volunteer firefighters from the Baker City Fire Department responded to the fire, for which there were two general alarms. The Baker Rural and Greater Bowen Valley volunteer districts each sent a truck, Lee said.

The house sits near the base of Spring Garden Hill, and Lee said that had the fire happened later in the year, when the sagebrush and grass on that steep hill is drier, or on a windier day, the fire "would have gone up that hill in a heartbeat."

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