

COVID

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For the period March 23 through April 2, that age group accounted for just 28% of the county's cases.

Starting in early April the number of cases in county residents younger than 40 began to rise.

From April 3-21, that group had 55% of the new cases.

Meanwhile the number of cases among people 70 and older — the group most likely to become severely ill or to die — has plummeted.

Of Oregon's 2,508 deaths attributed to COVID-19 during the pandemic, almost 76% were 70 or older. In Baker County, 13 of the 14 people who died after testing positive for the virus were 70 or older (the one exception is a 59-year-old man who died on Feb. 2).

The 70-and-older age group accounted for 17.5% of Baker County's new cases from March 23 to April 2. The group's share dropped to 9.9% from April 3-21, and to just under 2% from April 15-30.

During the latter period there were no cases in the county among residents 80 and older, said Holly Kerns, a public information officer for the county.

Total cases includes people who tested positive for COVID-19 as well as presumptive cases — people who had symptoms consistent with the virus and were in close contact with someone who tested positive but haven't tested positive themselves. The county does not list positive tests and presumptive cases separately.

The 70-plus age group also has the highest vaccination rate in Baker County, with about 65% of county residents in that group fully or partially vaccinated, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

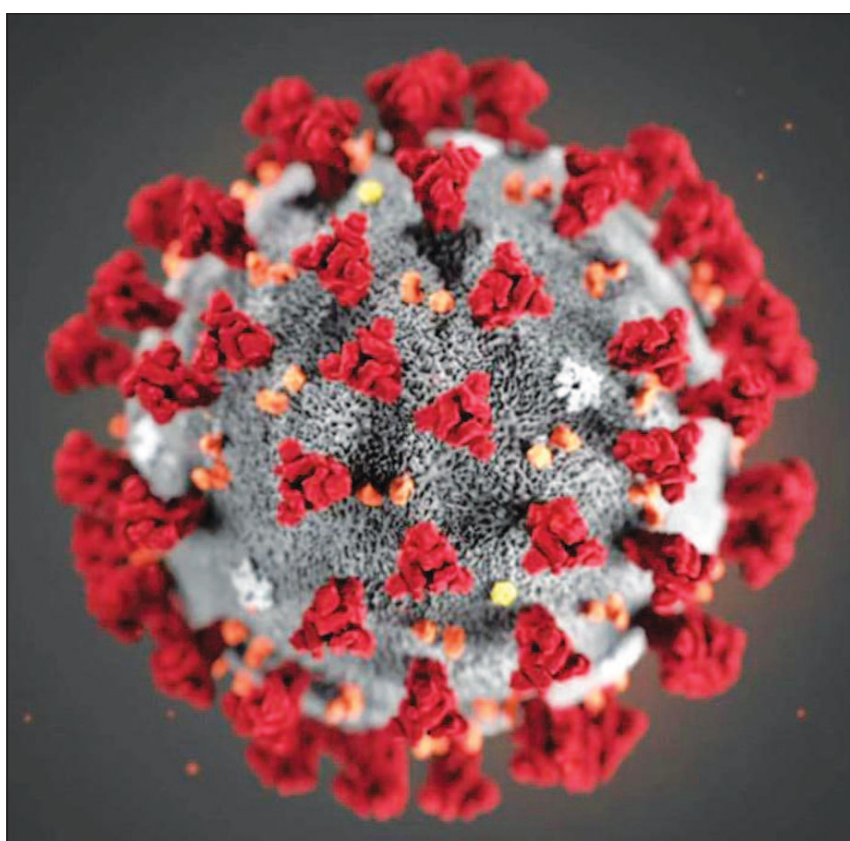
Although vaccination rates for county residents younger than 40 aren't available, the total number of residents in that age group who are partially or fully vaccinated is 777. That's 13.7% of the total people vaccinated in the county.

Younger residents, with the ex-

Age Trends in Baker County COVID-19 Cases

AGE RANGE	% CASES 3/23-4/2	4/3-21	4/15-30
70 and older	17.5%	9.9%	2%
60 to 69	10.5%	13.2%	3.9%
50 to 59	24.6%	11.0%	9.8%
40 to 49	19.3%	11.0%	13.7%
30 to 39	10.5%	26.4%	25.5%
20 to 29	8.8%	4.4%	21.6%
10 to 19	7.0%	16.5%	13.7%
9 and younger	1.8%	7.7%	9.8%

Source: Baker County Health Department



A depiction of a COVID-19 virus particle.

Centers for Disease Control

ception of health care workers, first responders, teachers and other school employees and some other groups, weren't eligible to be vaccinated for most of the winter.

Everyone 16 and older is now eligible.

The largest increase in new cases in Baker County since April 15 was

among people in their 20s. That group, which accounted for 4.4% of cases from April 3-21, jumped to 21.6% from April 15-30.

That was the second-highest percentage of any group during the period, behind only people in their 30s, who totaled 25.5% of the county's cases.

SIDEWALKS

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The existing sidewalks are narrow and have obstructions, curb ramps don't meet ADA standards, and there are no bike lanes, according to ODOT.

The new sidewalk on the south side of Campbell Street will extend from Birch Street east under the freeway to the offramp, where it will connect to an existing sidewalk that borders the Grocery Outlet parking lot.

The three-lane configuration will match that for Camp-

bell Street from Birch Street west to Main Street.

The current lane striping from Birch Street east under the freeway to the onramp and offramp for westbound freeway traffic, is four lanes, with a center turn lane.

East of the onramp and offramp, the street has one lane in each direction, with no center turn lane.

Although ODOT is overseeing the construction, Baker City will be responsible for maintaining the new sidewalks and ramps, which are slated to be finished by the end of June. The City Council approved an agreement with ODOT for the project in August 2019.

AID

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When counties are at extreme risk, indoor dining is prohibited in restaurants and bars, and occupancy is severely limited in theaters, fitness centers and museums.

Bennett said the county's

goal is to distribute the money as soon as possible. The money is from Oregon's share of the 2020 CARES Act, the first federal COVID-19 relief package passed by Congress in March 2020 and signed into law by President Donald Trump.

Bennett said that unlike previous disbursements of

federal pandemic aid, in this case the county will require applying businesses to attest that they have complied with the extreme risk rules.

He said this will be a "self-certification" process, as the county won't be inspecting businesses to ensure compliance with, for instance, the ban on indoor dining.

The application process should be simple, especially for businesses that have previously received aid.

Baker County will move to high risk starting Friday, May 7. Indoor dining is allowed under high risk, up to 25% of capacity or 50 total people, including staff, whichever is fewer.

U of O officials 'disappointed' about large parties during Ducks' spring football game

EUGENE (AP)—The University of Oregon says it is "disappointed" to learn about large crowds gathering for parties during the Ducks spring game as the region weathers a spike in cases of COVID-19 and businesses endure new restrictions.

Lane County, where the university is located, moved back to "extreme risk" on Friday, meaning that bars and restaurants were limited to outdoor dining only and normal social gathering places were off-limits. Capacity at a spring

game for the Ducks football team at Autzen Stadium had been set at 15% but the new restrictions meant no spectators or tailgaters were allowed.

Instead, students packed into parties at private homes. Photos and videos of several large parties Saturday circulated on social media, showing people standing shoulder-to-shoulder and without masks, The Register-Guard reported.

The University of Oregon issued a statement late Sunday condemning

the behavior but said there was little it could do about parties at private houses off campus.

"The university has worked very hard to educate students about the serious COVID-19 health risks of gathering in groups without masks," the statement said. "This behavior is not representative of the majority of UO students, who we have seen work diligently to follow health guidelines."

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WILDFIRE

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Although many of the wildfires in Northeast Oregon happen on public land — which makes up half of Baker County's two million acres — Wildfire Awareness Week focuses on the steps private property owners can take to protect their land and, especially, their homes and other buildings.

The Baker County Interagency Fire Prevention Team, which consists of officials from local, state and federal firefighting agencies, uses the weeklong event to remind residents to take a look around their property.

This is particularly important for people who live in the "wildland-urban interface" — zones where homes are built among, or next to, forests and other areas especially prone to wildfires, said Gary Timm, fire division manager for Baker County Emergency Management.

Timm and other members of the county's Fire Prevention Team urge rural residents to make sure they have what are known as "defensible spaces" around their homes.

The basic idea is to avoid having lots of combustible stuff on or very close to buildings — drifts of pine needles on the roof

or in the gutters, or shrubs and trees brushing against the siding, to cite a couple of examples.

Timm encourages property owners to peruse the website, firewise.org, run by the National Fire Protection Association, for tips about creating a defensible space and other tactics to protect property from fires.

Timm also points out that although lightning ignites most of the fires on public land, the percentage of human-caused fires is much higher on private property — about 70% of all fires statewide.

He encourages everyone, whether they live in an urban interface or recreate in fire-prone areas, to understand restrictions in effect during fire season, such as limits or bans on campfires.

That information is available at the Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch Center's website, bmidc.org.

"Baker County Wildfire Awareness Week is an example of how fire agencies are working together to increase fire education and reduce human-caused fires," Timm said. "Baker County residents can join the effort just by taking time to refamiliarize themselves on local fire prevention standards and taking action around the home."

Creating A Defensible Space

The following tips are from the National Fire Protection Association's website, firewise.org.

IMMEDIATE ZONE

This includes the home or other buildings, and the area within five feet of the most extended part of the structure

- Clean roofs and gutters of dead leaves, debris and pine needles that could catch embers.
- Replace or repair any loose or missing shingles or roof tiles to prevent ember penetration.
- Reduce embers that could pass through vents in the eaves by installing 1/8 inch metal mesh screening.
- Clean debris from exterior attic vents and install 1/8 inch metal mesh screening to reduce embers.
- Repair or replace damaged or loose window screens and any broken windows. Screen or box-in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating.
- Move any flammable material away from wall exteriors — mulch, flammable plants, leaves and needles, firewood piles — anything that can burn. Remove anything stored underneath decks or porches.

INTERMEDIATE ZONE

From five to 30 feet beyond the most extended part of the structure

- Clear vegetation from under large stationary propane tanks.
- Create fuel breaks with driveways, walkways/paths, patios, and decks.
- Keep lawns and native grasses mowed to a height of four inches.
- Remove ladder fuels (vegetation under trees) so a surface fire cannot reach the crowns. Prune trees up to six to ten feet from the ground; for shorter trees do not exceed 1/3 of the overall tree height.
- Space trees to have a minimum of eighteen feet between crowns with the distance increasing with the percentage of slope.
- Tree placement should be planned to ensure the mature canopy is no closer than ten feet to the edge of the structure.
- Tree and shrubs in this zone should be limited to small clusters of a few each to break up the continuity of the vegetation across the landscape.

EXTENDED ZONE

From 30 to 100 or 200 feet

- Remove dead plant and tree material.
- Remove small conifers growing between mature trees.
- Remove vegetation adjacent to storage sheds or other outbuildings within this area.
- Trees 30 to 60 feet from the home should have at least 12 feet between canopy tops.
- Trees 60 to 100 feet from the home should have at least 6 feet between the canopy tops.

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