

## COVID

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Between May 1-20, no county resident in that age range tested positive for the virus, according to the Baker County Health Department.

The infection rate among county residents 70 and older has dropped over the past two months:

- 17.5% of new cases from March 23 through April 2
- 9.9% of new cases from April 3-21
- 2% of new cases from April 15-30

Of the 15 county residents who have died after testing positive for COVID-19, according to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), all but one was older than 70. The lone exception is a 59-year-old man who died on Feb. 2.

On Thursday, May 20, the OHA reported that a 74-year-old Baker County man had died May 15, after testing positive for the virus on May 3.

The man had underlying medical conditions, according to OHA.

"I'm very sorry for his family and friends' loss,"

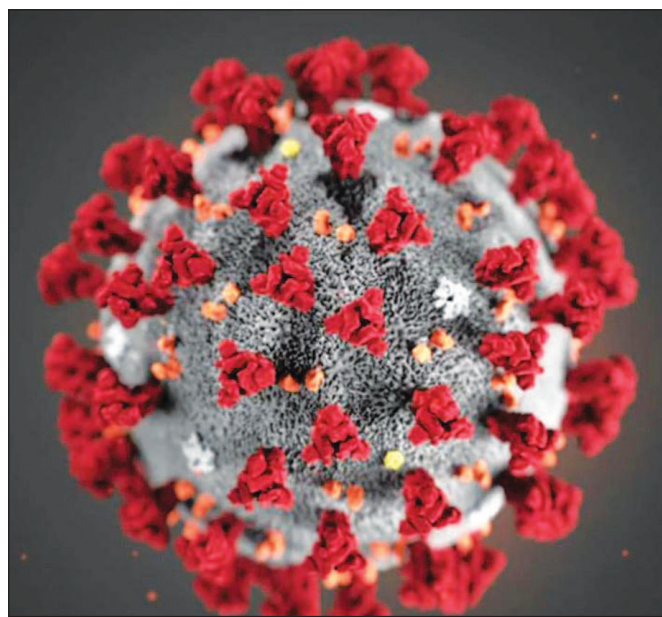
Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett said in a press release. "Over a year into this pandemic, it hasn't gotten any easier to receive a report like this. I ask that everyone stay aware that there are, and are going to continue to be, individuals who haven't or can't receive a vaccine. Thanks for everything you've done to protect our community, and please continue to make choices that protect each other."

The death reported Thursday was the county's first

## Age Trends in Baker County COVID-19 Cases

AGE RANGE	% CASES 3/23-4/2	4/3-21	4/15-30	5/1-15
70 and older	17.5%	9.9%	2%	0%
60 to 69	10.5%	13.2%	3.9%	11.1%
50 to 59	24.6%	11.0%	9.8%	11.1%
40 to 49	19.3%	11.0%	13.7%	7.4%
30 to 39	10.5%	26.4%	25.5%	18.5%
20 to 29	8.8%	4.4%	21.6%	11.1%
10 to 19	7.0%	16.5%	13.7%	11.1%
9 and younger	1.8%	7.7%	9.8%	29.6%

Source: Baker County Health Department



A depiction of a coronavirus particle.

COVID-19-related fatality in more than a month.

A 71-year-old Baker County woman died on April 14 at a Boise hospital, seven days after testing positive.

### Case rates

From May 1-20, Baker County reported 42 new cases, a rate of 2.1 per day. The daily case rate during April was 5.4.

If May's trend continues, it

will have the lowest daily case rate since October.

For the 13-day period May 8-20, the county reported no new cases on five days, and a single case on six days.

"Our numbers are better than what we've seen in months," said Nancy Staten, director of the Baker County Health Department.

While there have been no infections among residents 70

and older in May, the largest share of cases during the month has been among people 9 and younger. That group, which accounted for just 1.8% of cases from March 23 to April 2, had 29.6% of cases from May 1-15.

Staten said those younger residents have generally had cold-like symptoms, some of which initially were thought to be allergies.

### Vaccinations

As of Thursday, May 20, a total of 5,998 Baker County residents — 35.7% of the population of about 16,800 — were either fully vaccinated (5,218, or 31.1%) or partially vaccinated (780, or 4.6%).

The vaccination rate is highest among residents 80 and older, 67% of whom are fully or partially vaccinated. Most of those people — 694 of 742 — are fully vaccinated.

The second-highest vaccination rate 66.3%, is among people ages 70 to 74.

Staten said she doesn't think it's a coincidence that infections among residents older than 70 have plummeted as that age group's vaccination status has increased.

"That's protecting people from getting COVID," Staten said. "That just makes sense."

Rates are lower among younger residents, many of whom weren't eligible for inoculation until some time in March or April.

Vaccination rates range from 45% for people ages 60 to 64, to 14.6% for ages 16 to 19, who have been eligible to be vaccinated for a month.

The OHA also has started tracking vaccination rates by ZIP code. In Baker County:

- Sumpter: 134 of 282 residents vaccinated, 47.5%
- Halfway: 391 of 904, 43.3%
- Haines: 291 of 740, 39.3%
- Baker City: 4,533 of 12,348, 36.7%
- Durkee: 26 of 85, 30.6%
- Unity: 28 of 129, 29.5%
- Richland: 229 of 798, 28.7%
- Huntington: 132 of 501, 26.3%
- Bridgeport/Hereford: 20 of 77, 26%
- Oxbow: 24 of 216, 11.1%

## COVID-19 vaccinations in Baker County, by age group

As of Friday, May 21 a total of 6,006 Baker County residents — 35.8% of the population — were either fully vaccinated (5,273, 31.4%) or partially vaccinated (733, 4.4%). The breakdown by age (the percentage is for that age group; e.g., 67% of county residents 80 and older are fully or partially vaccinated):

- **80 AND OLDER:** 742 (67%)
- **75 TO 79:** 538 (58.4%)
- **70 TO 74:** 844 (66.3%)
- **65 TO 69:** 857 (55%)
- **60 TO 64:** 690 (45%)
- **50 TO 59:** 861 (37.5%)
- **40 TO 49:** 575 (35%)
- **30 TO 39:** 502 (25.9%)
- **20 TO 29:** 301 (23%)
- **16 TO 19:** 96 (14.6%)

Source: Oregon Health Authority

# La Grande man describes gunpoint encounter with Sprague

■ Travis Sprague, Baker man accused of spraying bear spray in police officer's face, was arrested in La Grande

By Phil Wright

The (La Grande) Observer

LA GRANDE — Gary Hatch said he was just turning off his outside light Wednesday night, May 19, when he heard a tapping at the door.

He lives in the 1700 block of Claire Street, a neighborhood on La Grande's east side that he said tends to be quiet. What he said happened next shattered any solace.

Hatch opened the door, and a

man with a sawed-off shotgun burst through.

"When he came here, he just busted the barrel against my forehead and then lowered the barrel to my chest," Hatch recalled. "He said he was going to kill me."

Hatch, 59, said he has a gun, but it was in his bedroom, and nothing prepared him for this encounter.

"It had to be one of the scariest moments of my life," Hatch said. A

sawed-off shotgun. And I still have the bruise on my forehead."

The purple semicircle on Hatch's forehead was evident on the late afternoon of May 20. Hatch also said the man at the trigger end of that shotgun was the same man police arrested May 20 in connection with a May 19 shooting and break-in just a block over on East Glacier Street.

Police identified that suspect as Travis James Sprague, 24, of Baker

County, who is now in custody in the Baker County Jail. Sprague had a Baker County warrant for his arrest on numerous felonies, including burglary, attempted kidnapping and assaulting a police officer, the latter charge stemming from the allegation that Sprague sprayed bear spray in the face of Baker City Police officer Koby Essex on May 14.



Phil Wright/The (La Grande) Observer  
Gary Hatch shows the bruise on his forehead.

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# Oregon revenue surges, leading to bigger tax 'kicker' rebates in 2022

By Peter Wong

Oregon Capital Bureau

For Oregon's state budget, and for Oregon taxpayers, it appears everything's coming up roses these days.

An economic surge as the coronavirus pandemic

wanes will produce \$1 billion more for state coffers than state economists projected just three months ago. That will be enough to boost state spending, without cuts, as lawmakers finish work on the state budget

for the next two years.

Meanwhile, that surge will result in an estimated \$1.4 billion — more than twice the amount projected back on Feb. 24 — going back to taxpayers next year in the form of "kicker" credits

against their 2021 tax bills. The final figure will be determined in the September economic and revenue forecast, but the share of tax liability is projected at 13.6%.

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## New At The Library

Patrons can reserve materials in advance online or by calling 541-523-6419. Drive-in hours at 2400 Resort St. are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m.

Baker County Library's new additions this week include 26 bestsellers, 12 audiobooks, 24 children's books, and 76 other new books. See everything new this week to Baker County Library District at [wowbrary.org](http://wowbrary.org).

### FICTION

- "First Person Singular: Stories," Haruki Murakami
- "Great Circle," Maggie Shipstead
- "Honey Girl," Morgan Rogers.
- "The Last Bookshop in London," Madeline Martin.
- "The Last Thing He Told Me," Laura Dave

### NONFICTION

- "Hacking Darwin," Jamie Metz.
- "The Handweaver's Pattern Directory," Anne Dixon.
- "Hymns of the Republic," S.C. Gwynne.
- "Killing the Mob," Bill O'Reilly
- "Reading Reflex," Carmen & Geoffrey McGuinness

### CHILDREN'S

- "Art For Kids," Susan Schwake
- "Cardboard Creations," Barbara Rucci.
- "The Color Monster," Anna Llenas
- "The Crayon Man," Natascha Biebow
- "Every Color of Light," Hiroshi Osada

## HAINES

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But this year they'll be joined, as usual, by several other events as part of what Friends of Haines bills as an "old fashioned Fourth of July celebration."

Rowe said the group had hoped to have events in the city park as in the past.

But so long as the state continues to have restrictions in place on gatherings, the city can't allow events on city property, Haines Mayor Jim Brown said.

Brown said the city's insurance policy requires that the city comply with those regulations.

"It's totally a liability issue," he said.

That was also the case in 2020, and it's the reason Friends of Haines didn't have events in the city park.

But rather than cancel the festivities that precede the fireworks show, Rowe said Friends of Haines looked for other options.

"We just decided that we're going to do it on private property," Rowe said.

Most events on the Fourth, which is a Sunday, will take place on the east side of Front Street, the main street through Haines.

The Haines Art Festival will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the grassy area just north of the Haines Sell-Rite.

Other events:

- Cowboy breakfast, 7 a.m. to 10 a.m.

at the Elkhorn Grange, 925 Third St.

- National anthem, performed by Steffi Carter, 10 a.m.; Carter will sing from the balcony at the Haines Sell-Rite.
- Parade starting at 10 a.m.
- Barbecue fundraiser for the Mabry James Anders Memorial Fund, 11 a.m., with music by Barefoot and Bonafide.
- Fireworks at 10 p.m. The show will be from its usual location near the rodeo grounds.

Although Rowe notes that the entire schedule is "subject to change," depending on the progress of the pandemic, she's optimistic that with case rates declining in Baker County, there won't be any problems.

Rowe said she thinks it's vital that this year Haines has all its usual Independence Day events, rather than the fireworks show alone.

She worries that if the full slate of events is canceled two straight years, local residents will lose interest, and get used to making other plans on the holiday.

"We don't want to see it die," Rowe said. "I feel if we don't pull it off this year, we're going to start losing participation. That's one reason I wanted to work so hard to get it back going."

Rowe said she believes that many Haines area residents were concerned about COVID-19 a year ago, with the holiday happening little more than three months after the virus became

widespread in Oregon and the nation, and that their worries largely tempered their disappointment about popular events being canceled.

But she thinks the sentiment is quite different this year, with many people eager to enjoy a more typical summer.

### Fundraising challenge

Although Friends of Haines was able to put on the 2020 fireworks show, the group had to cancel its major fundraiser, the May steak dinner and auction.

That event brings in most of the money for the fireworks show, Rowe said.

"We put \$10,000 worth of fireworks up in the air," she said.

Friends of Haines had enough money to put down a deposit for fireworks last fall for the 2021 show.

But donations are more crucial than ever, Rowe said.

To that end, Friends of Haines has multiple ways for people to contribute, including online accounts at GoFundMe and Venmo.

Donations can also be dropped off at Haines Sell-Rite or the Main Frontier restaurant in Haines, or at the Main Event in Baker City, Rowe said.

Rowe said Kari Raffety, who owns the Main Frontier, which opened on Front Street in February, has offered space for Fourth of July events and has supported Friends of Haines' plans.

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