

U.S. boosting vaccine deliveries amid complaints of shortages

BY JONATHAN DREW AND ZEKE MILLER
Associated Press

Answering growing frustration over vaccine shortages, President Joe Biden announced Tuesday that the U.S. is ramping up deliveries to hard-pressed states over the next three weeks and expects to provide enough doses to vaccinate 300 million Americans by the end of the summer or early fall.

Biden, calling the push a “wartime effort,” said the administration was working to buy an additional 100 million doses of each of the two approved coronavirus vaccines. He acknowledged that states in recent weeks have been left guessing how much vaccine they will have from one week to the next.

Shortages have been so severe that some vaccination sites around the U.S. had to

cancel tens of thousands of appointments with people seeking their first shot.

“This is unacceptable,” Biden said. “Lives are at stake.”

He promised a roughly 16% boost in deliveries to states over the next three weeks.

The administration said it plans to buy another 100 million doses each from drugmakers Pfizer and Moderna to ensure it has enough vaccine for the long term. Even more vaccine could be available if federal scientists approve a single-dose shot from Johnson & Johnson, which is expected to seek emergency authorization in the coming weeks.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that the government plans to make about

10.1 million first and second doses available next week, up from this week’s allotment of 8.6 million. The figures represent doses of both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. It was not immediately clear how long the surge of doses could be sustained.

Governors and top health officials have been increasingly raising the alarm about inadequate supplies and the need for earlier and more reliable estimates of how much vaccine is on the way so that they can plan.

Biden’s team held its first virus-related call with the nation’s governors on Tuesday and pledged to provide states with firm vaccine allocations three weeks ahead of delivery.

Biden’s announcement came a day after he grew more bullish about exceeding his vaccine pledge to de-

liver 100 million injections in his first 100 days in office, suggesting that a rate of 1.5 million doses per day could soon be achieved.

The administration has also promised more openness and said it will hold news briefings three times a week, beginning Wednesday, about the outbreak that has killed over 420,000 Americans.

The setup inherited from the Trump administration has been marked by miscommunication and unexplained bottlenecks, with shortages reported in some places even as vaccine doses remain on the shelf.

Officials in West Virginia, which has had one of the best rates of administering vaccine, said they have fewer than 11,000 first doses on hand even after this week’s shipment.

Vaccinations

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That’s earlier by as much as three weeks for some groups. Under existing state guidance, those 80 and older aren’t eligible for the vaccine until Feb. 7. The 75 to 79 age group, according to state guidelines, is Feb. 14. Those who are 65 and older, which represent about 20% of the population, are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine starting March 7, according to the state’s guidelines.

John Owen, a Bend resident, received his vaccine at Summit Medical Group’s Bend Memorial Clinic. The 78-year-old was told to come in because they had 40 surplus doses that would go to waste.

People age 70 and older account for 77% of the COVID-19 related deaths, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

Similarly, Grant County has been issuing COVID-19 vaccinations to those 65 and older since Jan. 20. Some counties have vaccinated people quicker than others, said Jonathan Modie, Oregon Health Authority spokesman.

In Deschutes County, it is difficult to know if everyone in the medical and educational fields received the vaccine, said Lisa Goodman, St. Charles Health System spokeswoman.

“Generally we’re watching the scheduling and gauging demand for each group based on how quickly appointments are being scheduled,” Goodman said in an email. “If we see a discernible and consistent decline in registration, we advocate for moving forward to the next eligible group.”

Neither the county nor St. Charles has data on how many educators or health care professionals have declined to take the vaccine. Even though the vaccinations are now available for those age 75 and above, educators and health care professionals can still sign up, Goodman said.

“We want to vaccinate as many people as quickly as possible and, provided we have the vaccines, we will continue to work hard to stay ahead of the state schedule,” Goodman said.



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How to make an appointment

People who want to sign up can schedule an appointment at stcharleshealthcare.org or by calling 541-699-5020. Expect to leave a message and receive a call back. An appointment for the second dose of the vaccine is scheduled at the time of the first dose.

The county and St. Charles have opted to issue vaccinations at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center in Redmond. With the help of the Oregon National Guard, health officials expect to use the entire 11,775 dose allotment that arrived on Tuesday.

Last week more than 4,600 vaccines were given to those eligible, said Morgan Emerson, Deschutes County Health Services spokeswoman.

“Our current vaccine supply allows us to move into adults 75 and older,” Emerson said in an email. “We’re excited to have the opportunity to begin vaccinating Central Oregonians.”

To date, 589,200 doses of vaccine have been delivered to sites across Oregon, according to the Oregon Health Authority dashboard.

At the Jefferson County clinics, COVID-19 vaccine schedules are being filled up with people who are in other classifications, said Tami Kepta, Jefferson County public health spokeswoman. At this time, only members of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs have received a second dose, Kepta said.

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COVID-19

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Deschutes, Crook and Jefferson counties remain at extreme risk.

Tillamook County was the big mover, dropping from extreme risk all the way to lower risk. Curry County went from moderate to lower. Grant rose from lower to moderate risk. All other counties remained in the current status.

The levels will be in place from Friday through Feb. 11, with the next revision announced Feb. 9.

Brown said the state will issue new guidelines allowing for indoor activities that

were previously banned in extreme risk counties.

Beginning Friday, a maximum of six people can be indoors at facilities such as gyms that are over 500 square feet. The new rules do not include indoor dining.

Facilities smaller than 500 square feet may allow for one-to-one customer experiences, such as personal training.

All facilities must follow guidelines on social distancing, face coverings, hygiene and cleaning of surfaces. The full updated guidance will be posted to coronavirus.oregon.gov by Friday.

Brown encouraged people to exercise outdoors when-

“We have seen over the last several weeks that Oregonians have largely complied with risk levels to the point that we have not seen a surge in hospitalizations that would have jeopardized hospital capacity.”

— Oregon Gov. Kate Brown

ever possible.

“The science has shown us that outdoor activities are safer than indoor activities when it comes to the spread of COVID 19,” she said.

But a recent drop in infection rates and the lack of a major “spike” in COVID-19 cases over the winter holidays allowed for some lim-

ited indoor activity during the colder winter months.

“We have seen over the last several weeks that Oregonians have largely complied with risk levels to the point that we have not seen a surge in hospitalizations that would have jeopardized hospital capacity,” Brown said.

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Homeless

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But the COVID-19 pandemic is shaking up how this count is usually run. In response to guidelines from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, local governments and nonprofit organizations are asked to limit interactions between homeless people and volunteers by having fewer volunteers. Across the country, the pandemic has led several areas to delay, or even cancel the Point-in-Time count altogether.

In Deschutes County, it was tradition to advertise and hold large events that offered food to bring people to one place to take the survey. Those large events aren’t safe to hold anymore, said Colleen Thomas, the homeless services coordinator for Deschutes County.

So this year, the region will rely on homeless service providers and nonprofits to do the count over a 10-day period, which began on Jan. 20 and will end Jan. 29, and ask people whether they were homeless the night of Jan. 20 to maintain consistency. Service providers will use an app instead of paper surveys to capture demographic information, Thomas said.

“We, as in the (Homeless Leadership Coalition), decided to move forward because we recognized the importance of the data,” Thomas said.

But some service providers, including Thomas, fear these changes could lead the homeless population to be undercounted more than usual.

Service providers for years



Bulletin file

In this January 2016 file photo, John Lodise with The Shepherds House in Bend helps Judy Vacha fill out a form for the annual Point-In-Time count of people who identify as homeless. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, some social welfare advocates in Central Oregon worry that the 2021 count will be underreported.

have warned that the Point-in-Time count, also known as the PIT count, already underrepresents the number of homeless people in an area because it only shows data for what people were doing on one night in January.

But with fewer volunteers and more reliance on service providers to capture data from people spread out for miles all over rural parts of the county, counting could be more difficult.

COVID-19 regulations around gatherings have also complicated the counting effort. For example, the Family Kitchen — a nonprofit that serves meals to homeless people — shifted from indoor dining to to-go meals since the pandemic hit.

In a more usual year during the PIT count, people are hang-

ing out for longer, which means there is more chance for someone to take the survey, said Donna Burklo, the program director at Family Kitchen.

With to-go meals, the only chance service providers have to talk to someone is while they are outside in line for food.

“There’s a lot less opportunity to build up any rapport,” Burklo said. “I do think that’s going to make it pretty difficult.”

Undercounting is an issue because federal and state funding is often tied to PIT count numbers. A lower number could make it look like the region needs fewer resources, according to social service providers.

“I personally have concerns that an undercount may appear that homelessness is not a con-

cern in our region, which in fact is the exact opposite,” Thomas said in an email. “Not only does the PIT count affect potential funding streams, it gives a voice to those wanting to tell their story and helps to educate the greater public about the scope and barriers those experiencing homelessness in our community are facing.”

Stacey Witte, the executive director of the homeless outreach nonprofit REACH, said she is concerned homeless people will be undercounted more than usual because of the COVID-19 restrictions. She fears a lower count could impact getting grants to fund housing programs, which would “impact all of us.”

This year in particular is also harder than usual for homeless residents, too, she said.

“They are in such (a) crisis; the last thing on their mind is to fill out an intake, understandably,” Witte said.

Thomas said that of course the county will always have the concern about funding, but said HUD will give regions an opportunity to provide explanation.

“Since all of the counties in

our region are also still in the extreme high risk category in relation to COVID-19, they will take into consideration that along with how we report what our implementation of the survey has been this year,” Thomas said in an email.

But some service providers are optimistic about the count this year.

John Lodise, the director of emergency services for Shepherd’s House Ministries who runs the warming shelter, said traditionally the number of people who show up at the warming shelter tends to be lower around the time the county is doing the PIT count — possibly to avoid being asked to do the survey.

But this year the count time has landed on a particularly cold and snowy week, bringing more people to the shelter, and thus more people to count, he said.

Molly Heiss, the director of housing stabilization for the nonprofit NeighborImpact, said she thinks this year has the potential to produce a higher count than usual.

She believes this because homeless residents already know and trust the service providers who are asking them to

take a survey, versus having unknown volunteers coming into their camp.

Usually, the region has trouble counting people who are chronically homeless because they are reticent to take the survey, she said.

“I think the more visibility and trust we build, the more likely we are to count the more chronically homeless,” Heiss said.

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DEATH NOTICES

Mary L. Gilbert of Bend, OR
January 8, 1938 -
January 19, 2021

Arrangements:
Niswonger-Reynolds Funeral Home is honored to serve the family.
541-382-2471 Please visit the online registry for the family at www.niswonger-reynolds.com

Services:
A gathering of family will be held at a later date
Contributions may be made to:
Habitat for Humanity
224 NE Thurston Ave,
Bend, OR 97701

Donna M. Furry of Bend, OR
August 19, 1930 -
January 13, 2021

Arrangements:
Niswonger-Reynolds Funeral Home is honored to serve the family.
541-382-2471 Please visit the online registry for the family at www.niswonger-reynolds.com

Services:
A memorial gathering will be held at a later date

Marshall Albert Rogers of La Pine, OR
March 1, 1947 -
January 21, 2021

Arrangements:
Baird Memorial Chapel of La Pine is honored to serve the Rogers family.
Please visit our website, www.bairdfh.com, to share condolences and sign the online guestbook.

OBITUARY DEADLINE

Call to ask about our deadlines
541-385-5809
Monday-Friday 10am-3pm
Email: obits@bendbulletin.com

Michael Steven Lake

December 6, 1953 - January 16, 2021

Michael Steven Lake was born in Denver, Colorado on December 6th, 1953 to Elaine and Leo Lake.

Michael graduated Jefferson High in Edgewater, Colorado in 1972. He started his own security business at age 21 and continued to his death. Michael met and married his wife, Kathleen, August 15th, 1981.

He worked hard with a motto “Do it right the first time.” He enjoyed fishing, crabbing, helping others, and spending time with his family and children.

He was preceded in death by his father Leo Lake.

Michael is survived by his mother Elaine Craig, sister Sharon Lake Hasty, his wife Kathleen and children Paulette, Jaden, Macayla, Taylor, Alethea, Jade, Celeste, and granddaughter Rae.

Cynthia of Bend

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