



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Hospital has set up a tent to triage incoming patients to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

# Hospital erects emergency room triage tent

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Blue Mountain Hospital District has created a separate Emergency Department entrance for patients with respiratory symptoms.

All patients will go to the triage tent outside the emergency room from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Those with respiratory symptoms will be taken through a respiratory entrance to negative-pressure rooms where health care providers can provide a triage assessment, said Lori Lane, district health information manager.

Lane said those without respiratory symptoms



Lori Lane

will be taken through the regular emergency room entrance.

Lane said from 5 p.m. to 7 a.m. patients will

be directed to the normal emergency room entrance where a health care worker will perform a triage assessment for respiratory symptoms and direct those patients to the appropriate area for care.

"I have been impressed by all the hard work and long hours the staff has been putting in to be prepared," Lane said.

Lane said the hospital has signage out to direct patients to the tent.

Severely ill COVID-19 patients need help with their breathing, which is done by inserting a tube through the mouth and then into the airway so that a patient can be placed on a ventilator, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The procedure requires airborne isolation using a negative-pressure room, an isolation technique used to prevent cross-contamination.

Lane reminded patients with respiratory symptoms to call before arriving to reduce the chances of spreading the virus.

# County employees adjust to working from home

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

As Grant County Court plans to reassess whether to extend the closures of its offices in its next session, county offices have been resilient in maintaining their functionality.

"This is an ugly situation, and they are making it work," said Grant County ESD Superintendent Robert Waltenberg, whose office provides information technology support to the county offices.

With the stay-home order forcing nearly every department, from the clerk's office to the road department, to work from home, the employees have had to improvise.

Waltenberg said the ESD office set up the Planning Department, County Clerk, district attorney, Justice Court, CASA, victim's assistance, the fairgrounds, Road Department and Human Resources.

He said, so far, there have not been any challenges or technical difficulties with employees working from home.

Wright said she has no count on who is working remotely. The court left it to the department heads to decide how they were going to handle it, she said.

Wright said an email went out from the Emergency Operations Center to county employees from other departments who were furloughed, but she does not know if any of those employees took the opportunity.

Grant County Fairgrounds Manager Mindy Winegar said she has offered to help at the EOC, but nobody from the center has called.

County Court Judge Scott Myers — who at County Court March 25 told EOC Incident Commander Dave Dobler to use county employees unable to work from home to fill open positions at the EOC — said he does not know if the EOC hired any of those employees.

Myers said there is only between two and three



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell  
Mindy Winegar addresses county court in February. Winegar said that she reached out to the EOC to help out, but has yet to hear back.



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell  
A FedEx package hangs on the County Clerk's office door at the courthouse Thursday.

employees at the courthouse at one time.

"Anyone with the capability is working from home," said Myers

Wright said Grant County employees who are unable to work from home will receive paid leave. She said the county will treat it like a "snow day."

"From an economic standpoint, it does not make sense to not pay them," Wright said. "Our local economy does not need to take a hit."

Wright said some employees from outlying areas do not have internet access, and they have been coming into their respective offices when it has been necessary as the courthouse has remained open.

"Everyone has stepped up to the challenge," Wright

said. "They are being asked to do something we have never done before."

The closure, which has been in effect since March 23, is slated to last through at least April 10.

Wright said the external departments, such as the sheriff's office and the county road department, have policies and procedures in place concerning maintaining proper social distancing.

The Eagle was unable to reach Sheriff Glenn Palmer or Undersheriff Zach Mobley for comment.

For some departments, not much has really changed. Mike Springer, county surveyor, said normally most of his correspondence occurs by email and phone anyway, so he has not seen much of change to his department.

Additionally, some departments see benefits.

"There are less distractions, and I can get more done," said Myers.

Grant County Court canceled its meeting scheduled for April 8. Prairie City City Council also canceled its April 8 meeting.

# Grant County Food Bank experiences sharp rise in demand

Attendees must observe 6-foot separation

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Unemployment, more people at home and COVID-19 have caused a steep rise in the amount of people who picked up food from the Grant County Food Bank in March.

On March 25, 171 families went to the Grant County Food Bank, 66 more families than February and 21 more than originally planned.

Tom Sutton, a member of the food bank board of directors, added that the number of people served in March was 435 people.

"In February, we served 105 families, and I say we serve about 110 families on average. We planned for 150 families, but we went to 171," Sutton said. "When they started lining up out here, the



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz  
Tom Sutton talks about the modified shopping carts at the Grant County Food Bank, which makes getting boxes into cars easier.

sidewalk was broken up into 6-foot blocks, and I went out there, and there was one person at each mark."

Sutton is now planning to serve 200 families in April.

With the rise in clients at the food bank, a big priority for Sutton is their safety,

which is why he wants people to understand the importance of the 6-foot separation.

"If you and I are having a conversation 6 feet apart, then it's possible to apply this distance to the line, and that's what we would like," Sutton said.



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz  
Boxes used at the Grant County Food Bank have been provided by the Grant County Veteran Services for years.

Another change is that clients do not have the option to come inside the food bank. Volunteers ask each person for their name, address and preferences for items in their box. This is an important step for Sutton since the budget for buying food for the food bank has not changed.

When customers notify the food bank of what they don't

need or want, it prevents wasting food, which can be used for another family. Once a volunteer makes a box, the box will be handed to the client outside.

Sutton said a board meeting in the beginning of April could change the process for getting orders and making boxes. Changes can be found on the Grant County Food Bank Facebook page if they are made.

One of the challenges Sutton plans to discuss during the board meeting is how to serve the community in a timely manner with the rise of demand.

"A challenge is that we can't serve 200 people in the time frame that we have. We'd generally get through 105-115 families from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., but we now have twice


as many people," Sutton said.

A highlight for Sutton in this experience has been the help provided from volunteers and members of the community.

"We partnered with the Veterans Administration and the People Mover, and I'd like to thank them for their help. They delivered food to the shut-ins and the senior citizens that we don't want up here because of COVID-19," Sutton said. "I'd rather take the food to them myself than put them in danger."

Sutton said there are other food banks in Grant County also hard at work in Monument, Prairie City and at the United Methodist Church.


The Grant County Food Bank will distribute food from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday, April 22.




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