

# Oregon seeing 'light at the end of the tunnel' of COVID-19 surge

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Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon hospitalizations for COVID-19 will peak at a much lower level than expected as state officials see the steep spike driven by the omicron variant showing strong signs of waning.

Oregon is seeing "the light at the end of the tunnel" with infection rates dropping in Portland and other areas of the state.

"The potential beginning of a decrease is real," Dr. Dean Sidelinger, the state's health officer and top infectious disease expert, told reporters Friday, Jan. 28.

The health authority reported 7,222 new COVID-19 cases, down 649 cases from Thursday's report. The state reported 19 new deaths on Friday.

Hospitals reported 1,125 patients with COVID-19, five

less than Thursday. There are 176 COVID-19 patients in intensive care unit beds, up seven from the day before.

Oregon Health & Science University issued a new forecast Friday showing that hospitalizations would peak lower but later than projections last week.

Hospital patients with COVID-19 will likely top out at 1,200 on Feb. 6, according to the forecast presented by Dr. Peter Graven, OHSU's top statistical analyst.

That's far below the 3,000 cases OHSU forecast at one point early in the year, and below the 1,533 projected last week. The lower plateau has pushed the peak five days beyond the Feb. 1 mark forecast last week.

The current numbers have hospitals "near the breaking point," Sidelinger said.

Hospital beds will be in short supply for weeks as each

point on the back side of the spike is equally dangerous as the same levels going up.

"Hospitals have very little space right now to handle new cases of COVID-19 on top of what they're already dealing with," Graven said in the OHSU forecast. "Our hospitals and health care workers remain under severe strain."

Sidelinger said the Portland metro area was ahead of much of the rest of the state in a drop in infections because it was hit earlier in the omicron wave and also has a very high level of vaccination.

But the drop would eventually extend to the whole state over the next few weeks. He said it would likely hold despite Oregon neighboring Idaho, which is currently going through a belated spike in cases. But Oregon officials will monitor the situation in its neighboring state.

"The virus doesn't care

about borders," Sidelinger said.

The early signs of a drop in COVID-19 infections did not mean Oregon would soon change plans on vaccination and mask mandates.

Sidelinger said the state would file notices with the secretary of state on Friday and Monday to make certain rules and restrictions on mask-wearing and vaccination requirements for health and educational staff stay in place.

The rules were originally introduced on an emergency temporary basis, which can remain in force for a maximum of 180 days. Many of the rules hit the mark on Friday.

Sidelinger said the permanent rules would allow the measures to continue beyond the deadline. The move was mainly about relieving the state of the need to constantly renew the safeguards.

Sidelinger said Gov. Kate

Brown and the Oregon Health Authority had no intention of making the rules stretch indefinitely into the future.

"These measures will not be in place forever," he said. "But they are needed now."

Sidelinger echoed the opinion of federal health experts who earlier this week said the nation should shift its goal from eradicating COVID-19 to bringing it to an endemic stage where it would recur like the seasonal flu, but not cause major illness and death.

"We're closer to being able to be in a place where we're living with this virus rather than combating it and fighting it at every turn," Sidelinger said.

A unique aspect of the omicron variant is that it has infected children more frequently than earlier waves of the pandemic.

Pediatric cases in Oregon rose from under 1,000 near the end of the year to

13,000 on Jan. 9.

There is currently no COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5 and younger.

Though hospitals are "at a breaking point," Sidelinger said no medical centers have had to resort to the emergency standards of care the state announced earlier this month.

The standards are a guide for doctors on how to triage patients when resources are stretched beyond capacity.

Sidelinger said health officials are waiting for more signals in coming weeks that the drop in cases and hospitalizations continues. That could lead to the first extended respite from the pandemic since last June before the delta wave arrived in Oregon.

"I hope we can enjoy a spring and a summer where it is much more normal, where it's much more like 2019 and not like 2020 or 2021," Sidelinger said.

## COPS AND COURTS

Arrests and citations in the Blue Mountain Eagle are taken from the logs of law enforcement agencies. Every effort is made to report the court disposition of arrest cases.

### Grant County Circuit Court

Jan. 20: Ollie Leroi Starnes, 51, was sentenced to 10 months in jail and two years of post-prison supervision after being convicted of failure to report as a sex offender. A second count of felon in possession of a restricted weapon was dismissed. He will receive credit for time served and is eligible for an inpatient treatment program. Upon release from jail, Starnes will be allowed to move to Multnomah County to live with his daughter. In a separate case, Starnes was convicted of another count of failure to report as a sex offender and received an identical sentence. The two sentences are to be served concurrently.

Jan. 20: Gary A. Woods, 40, was fined \$440 following a conviction for reckless driving.

Jan. 20: Rodger Wayne Wright, 48, pleaded guilty to driving under the influence of intoxicants in an Oct. 10 incident. A charge of speeding was dismissed. He was ordered to serve 30 days in jail and complete 80 hours of community service or work crew time. Wright's driver's license was suspended for one year, and he was assessed \$2,225 in fines and fees. He was also placed on supervised probation for two years. In addition, he was ordered to complete the victim impact panel program, stay out of bars and liquor stores, obtain a substance abuse assessment and complete any recommended treatment.

### Grant County Sheriff

The Grant County Sheriff's Office reported the following for the week ending Jan. 26:

- Concealed handgun licenses: 2
- Average inmates: 15
- Bookings: 9
- Releases: 5
- Arrests: 4
- Citations: 2
- Fingerprints: 2
- Civil papers: 15
- Warrants processed: 0
- Asst./welfare check: 1
- Search and rescue: 0

### Justice Court

The Grant County Justice Court reported the following activity for the week ending Jan. 26:

- Driver's license suspensions: 4
- Hunting license suspensions: 3

Persons on probation: 45  
Traffic citations filed: 22  
Violations filed: 2  
Small claims/civil filed: 3  
Community service hours completed: 10  
Hearings held: 20

Violation of the basic rule: Efrain G. Camacho, 33, Portland, Nov. 28, 76/55 zone, fined \$265.

Exceeding the speed limit: Brady Keith Burch, 24, John Day, Oct. 31, 81/65 zone, fined \$265; Mark A. Woodby, 55, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Dec. 24, 54/35 zone, fined \$165; Ronald James Salazar, 34, Prairie City, Dec. 26, 83/65 zone, fined \$265; Keith L. Christen, 28, Burns, Dec. 20, 78/65 zone, fined \$265; Tamara Ivaschenko, 27, Modesto, California, Dec. 26, 51/35 zone, fined \$265; Ronald John Kriss, 64, Oakland, California, Dec. 4, 50/35, fined \$165.

Driving while suspended: Brady Keith Burch, 24, John Day, Oct. 31, fined \$440.

Open container: Blake Ibarra, 29, Prairie City, Jan. 6, fined \$265.

Failure to obey a traffic control device: Jason Lee Dyer, 48, Redmond, Dec. 26, fined \$225.

Failure to drive within lane: Joseph Alan Bailey, 24, Buhl, Idaho, Jan. 5, fined \$265.

Operating an off-road vehicle on a highway: Kaden M. Boyle, 20, Pendleton, Dec. 27, fined \$200.

### Dispatch

Grant County dispatch worked 152 calls during the week ending Jan. 28, including:

#### • Oregon State Police

Jan. 22: Advised of accident with injuries on Highway 26 near milepost 161.

Jan. 22: Advised of a male subject staggering on the side of Highway 26 near milepost 137.

Jan. 23: Advised of a non-injury accident on Highway 395 North near milepost 107B.

Jan. 23: Advised of a roadstruck deer on Highway 26 near milepost 158.

Jan. 26: Advised of a driving complaint on Highway 26 near milepost 159.

Jan. 26: Advised of a driving complaint on Highway 26 near milepost 170.

Jan. 26: Advised of a single-vehicle accident on Highway 395 North near milepost 105B.

#### • Grant County Sheriff's Office

Jan. 21: Responded to South Bridge Street in Prairie City for report of a restraining order violation. Shawn Kite, 53, of Prairie City was arrested for violating a restraining order and for an outstanding Grant County warrant.

Jan. 21: Responded to Humbolt Elementary School, Canyon City, for

a harassment complaint.

Jan. 22: Traffic stop on West Main Street, John Day. Driver warned for speeding.

Jan. 22: Responded to an alarm at the John Day Fossil Beds Visitor Center, Highway 19. Accidental alarm.

Jan. 22: Responded to Southwest Kilborne Street, John Day, for a civil problem.

Jan. 22: Responded to Southwest Kilborne Street, John Day, for an eviction issue.

Jan. 22: Responded to Main Street and Canyon Boulevard, John Day, for a non-injury accident.

Jan. 22: Advised of a suicidal subject on Southwest Kilborne Street, John Day.

Jan. 22: Received information regarding possible elder abuse at John Day Trailer Park.

Jan. 23: Responded to Highway 26 near milepost 149 for warrant service. Colton David, 26, of Monument was arrested on a Jefferson County warrant.

Jan. 23: Traffic stop on Front Street, Prairie City. Leo Buzzard III, 57, of Mt. Vernon cited for speeding and failure to renew registration.

Jan. 23: Responded to Meadowbrook Apartments, John Day, for suspicious circumstances.

Jan. 23: Responded to the old city shops, John Day. Christopher Carris Boyer, 32, was arrested for probation violation.

Jan. 24: Responded to Highway 26 near Bear Creek Road for a report of harassment.

Jan. 24: Responded to Bridge Street, Canyon City, for a report of fraud.

Jan. 24: Responded with OSP to Highway 395 in Long Creek for a driving complaint.

Jan. 24: Responded to West Ninth Street, John Day, for a report of a stolen vehicle and gun.

Jan. 24: Traffic stop at Highway 26 and Screech Alley, John Day. Driver warned for speeding.

Jan. 24: Responded to Aslin Avenue, Mt. Vernon, for report of an animal killed by dogs.

Jan. 24: Responded to a single-vehicle accident on Highway 26 near Lower Yard Road, John Day. No injuries reported.

Jan. 24: Advised of a dispute on Cottonwood Street, Mt. Vernon.

Jan. 24: Responded to Laycock Creek Road, Mt. Vernon, for a fraud report.

Jan. 25: Responded to Southwest Brent Drive, John Day, for a harassment complaint.

Jan. 25: Responded to Southeast Council Drive, Mt. Vernon, for a dispute.

Jan. 26: Responded to West Main Street, John Day, for a stolen vehicle.

Jan. 26: Responded to West

Main Street, John Day, for a theft complaint.

Jan. 26: Responded to East Main Street, John Day, for a welfare check.

Jan. 26: Responded to Maple Street, Granite, for a dispute. Gordon L. Ray, 62, of Granite was arrested on warrants out of Grant and Malheur counties.

Jan. 26: Responded to Loop Ranch Road near Mt. Vernon for an animal complaint.

Jan. 26: Responded to East Main Street, John Day, for a report of an assault and a suicidal subject.

Jan. 26: Responded to Izee-Paulina Highway near milepost 4 for a suspicious vehicle.

Jan. 26: Dispatched to Meadowbrook Apartments, John Day, for a theft report.

Jan. 26: Dispatched to Southeast Elm Street, John Day, for a car prowl.

Jan. 27: Advised of a suspicious vehicle on Southwest Canton Street, John Day.

Jan. 27: Responded to South Adams Road, Canyon City, for a theft report.

Jan. 27: Dispatched to Blue Mountain Hospital, John Day, for a panic alarm.

Jan. 27: Responded to Riverside Mobile Home Park, John Day, for a welfare check.

Jan. 27: Received a fraud complaint from Iron Triangle LLC, John Day.

Jan. 28: Took a theft report from Northwest Bridge Street, John Day.

Jan. 28: Received a theft report from Summit Prairie Road, Prairie City.

Jan. 28: Received a report of a motorist stranded near Strawberry Campground south of Prairie City.

Jan. 28: Responded to Old West Credit Union, John Day, for a theft report.

Jan. 28: Advised of a theft at Blue Mountain Hospital, John Day.

Jan. 28: Responded to Riverside Mobile Home Park, John Day, for a trespassing complaint.

Jan. 28: Advised of an abandoned vehicle near Magone Lake.

#### • John Day Ambulance

Jan. 22: Dispatched to Valley View Assisted Living for a lift assist.

Jan. 22: Dispatched to Valley View memory Care for a 95-year-old female with a head injury from a fall.

Jan. 22: Dispatched to Valley View Assisted Living for a lift assist.

Jan. 23: Dispatched to Valley View Assisted Living for a female with a fall injury.

Jan. 24: Dispatched to Fairground RV Park for a male with a possible infection.

Jan. 26: Dispatched to South Canyon Boulevard for a medical alert. Unfounded.

Jan. 26: Dispatched to Fairgrounds RV Park for a male who could not walk.

#### • Dayville Ambulance

Jan. 26: Responded with John Day Ambulance to West Franklin Street for a 53-year-old female with difficulty breathing.

Jan. 27: Dispatched to East Main Street for a female having a seizure.

#### • Long Creek Ambulance

Jan. 25: Responded to South Hewitt Street for an 80-year-old man with chest pains. Long Creek Fire and John Day Ambulance also responded.

#### • John Day Fire

Jan. 25: Responded to Northwest Bridge Street for a fire alarm. False alarm.

Jan. 27: Responded to Northwest Fifth Avenue for a possible flue fire. Unfounded.



**Oregon's Allocation of Conserved Water program can benefit land owners and citizens of the John Day River Basin. The program is administered by the Oregon Water Resources Department. It is completely voluntary and certified water right holders can withdraw within five years from the program if it does not perform as expected.**

## Notice: Certified Water Right Holders

### Water Right Holders! Have you done any irrigation efficiency projects in the last five years? You may be legally eligible to irrigate more lands.

Contact the Oregon Water Resources Department for more information - (503) 986-0900

Get the state one-pager at [https://www.oregon.gov/owrd/WRDFormsPDF/ACW\\_FAQ\\_8\\_2014.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/owrd/WRDFormsPDF/ACW_FAQ_8_2014.pdf)  
ACW@water.Oregon.gov  
email for questions

Oregon Revised Statutes  
537.455-537.500 Ore  
Admin Rules 690-18

More irrigation water is available in the John Day Basin.

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