

Rise in COVID cases alarms state health officials

The Columbia Press

The governor issued two new rules after Oregon had the worst week ever for new COVID-19 cases.

More cases were reported last week than in the entire month of May, state officials said.

“The last time we had fewer than 100 cases in a single day was more than a month ago,” a state-issued press release begins. “Half of all cases are from people under the age of 40 and one-third of all cases are from people under the age of 30. People in their 20s and 30s are the group most likely to get sick with COVID-19 in Oregon.”

Gov. Kate Brown ordered a statewide ban on indoor social gatherings of more than 10 people. It includes dinner parties, birthday parties, potlucks and book clubs. It does not affect restaurants, churches, event venues and other organizations.

Brown also ordered face coverings to be mandated in outdoor spaces where 6-foot distances can't be maintained. This might come up at a crowded trailhead, on sidewalks while awaiting entry to a business or at an outdoor event.

Businesses that have been following the guidance about face coverings, distancing and sanitation have not been identified as sources of significant transmission, according to the state.

THE NUMBERS

Oregon had a total of 13,081 cases as of Wednesday, with 247 deaths.

While the vast majority of people with novel coronavirus have recovered, there's a large gap in when they are recorded, state Health Officer Dr. Dean Sidelinger said in his weekly news briefing.

“The disease has progressed and we're unable to do week-



Gov. Kate Brown announces new rules regarding gatherings and face coverings.

ly updates,” he said. “It can be 60 days before they're counted as recovered.”

Clatsop County reported one new case in the past week, a man in his 60s who lives in south county.

As of Wednesday, Clatsop had recorded 56 cases since March 23, with 48 of them recovered and the other eight recovering at home.

Oregon Health Authority reported that 28,314 tests were performed July 6-12, with 5.8 percent of them coming back positive.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Oregon's total nonfarm employment rose by 56,600 jobs in June, following a gain of 26,100 jobs in May. Over the past two months, employers added back nearly a third of

the jobs that had been cut in March and April.

Oregon's unemployment rate dropped to 11.2 percent in June from 14.3 percent in May.

OUTBREAKS

Two outbreaks at work sites were reported in the past week.

Shearer's Foods, a snack manufacturer with 12 locations nationwide, reported 20 cases at its Hermiston facility. The case count can include household members and other people linked to the facility.

Snake River Correctional Institution in Ontario reported that 120 people in custody and two dozen staff members have tested positive. The prison houses 2,700 inmates, who now are in quarantine.

Astoria artist wins study grant

Artist Kate Speranza of Astoria won a \$1,500 award from the Oregon Arts Commission for an artist-in-residence program in Finland.

The awards were given to 40 Oregon artists for a variety of projects. Grants ranged from \$1,000 to \$8,000 for a total of \$112,342.

The Career Opportunity Grants support individual artists by enabling them to take advantage of opportuni-

ties that enhance their artistic careers. Most grants support the artists' participation in residencies, exhibitions or performance opportunities.

“We also are so proud to support artists in representing Oregon outside of the region and internationally,” said Anne Taylor, chair of the arts commission.

The Ford Family Foundation is a sponsor with the commission.

Inmates at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution and Oregon State Penitentiary also are under quarantine.

MODELING RAISES CONCERNS

A surge in new cases since the state began easing restrictions is causing alarm for those who use mathematics to model what the future holds.

“The bottom line is that the disease is spreading more rapidly than expected,” said Sidelinger, the state health officer. “Since reopening, Oregonians have not consistently modeled the behavior needed to contain the spread of COVID-19.”

He presented three poten-

tial scenarios:

- If transmission continues on the current trajectory over the next month, the estimated number of new daily infections could triple over the next four weeks.

- If transmission decreases by 10 percent starting July 3 and continuing over the next month, there would be 1,600 new daily infections. Hospitalization would be cut in half.

- If transmission increases by 10 percent, the model projects 7,300 daily infections.

“In any scenario, Oregonians must do more to flatten the curve of COVID-19 by taking the recommendations of health authorities,” Sidelinger said.

Razor clamming closed in north county

Razor clamming is closed in Clatsop County.

The closure is from July 15 to Sept. 30 to protect newly set young clams and applies to Clatsop County beaches and only those between the Columbia River and Tillamook Head south of Seaside.

The earliest recreational razor clamming could open is Oct. 1, and that's only if the growth rate of new clams is healthy.

Recreational mussel, bay clam and crab harvesting remains open along the entire Oregon coast.

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