

New COVID rules as cases skyrocket; county sees first death

The Columbia Press

Clatsop County recorded its first COVID-19 death this week.

The county resident was hospitalized at a facility outside of the county at the time of death, Public Health officials reported.

Since the pandemic began, Clatsop County has had 314 positive cases. Four have been hospitalized.

Of the county's total cases, 61 have been reported since the beginning of November, mirroring the rise in coronavirus cases seen in Oregon and nationally. Many of the local cases have been linked to small social gatherings.

In response to the rapid rise in cases, Gov. Kate Brown issued a statewide "freeze" order, restricting business and social activities for two weeks. It went into effect Wednesday in all Oregon counties.

The new measures close gyms, restaurants and bars through Dec. 2 (take-out food is allowed) and limit indoor gatherings to six.

"The virus is spreading in the community and, every day, it is infecting more and more Oregonians," Brown said. "The situation is dangerous and our hospitals have been sounding the alarms."

More than 1,000 new cases per day statewide has become the norm, she said. The 1,122 cases reported Nov. 12 was the highest number of Oregon cases reported in a single day since the pandemic started.

There had been 59,669 cases statewide as of Wednesday and 788 deaths.

The virus is raging across Oregon, said Dr. Dean Sidelinger, the state's health officer.

"The virus is spreading fast, and it threatens to overwhelm hospitals across the state with severely ill patients, if we don't act now," he said. "The two-week freeze Gov. Brown just announced will put an urgently needed brake on COVID-19's

accelerating momentum and help us bring the virus back under control. These actions can work if we follow them."

Columbia Memorial Hospital announced Nov. 13 that it is "pulling back on certain elective surgeries" to ensure beds are available.

"Maintaining open in-patient beds for emergencies as well as COVID-19 patients requires our physicians to consider delaying elective procedures until in-patient beds are more widely available," said Erik Thorsen, the hospital's chief executive officer. "We continue to be fortunate that local area hospitals have not experienced a surge of COVID-19 patients, but would be remiss if we did not adequately plan



Brown



Sidelinger



Thorsen

for an increase in cases."

The Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems applauded the two-week freeze.

"With COVID-19 cases soaring across the state, it is imperative that we act now to preserve hospital capacity," said Becky Hultberg, the organization's president. "If we are not able to slow the spread of COVID-19 now, hospital capacity for all Oregonians could be threatened, ... jeopardizing the availability of care for us all."

Dr. Esther Choo, an emergency room physician at Oregon Health and Science University, said "failing to stay home continues to cost

the lives of Oregonians – our neighbors, our friends, our families."

MODELING

The state's latest modeling indicates a steep increase in COVID-19 spread that dates to early November.

According to the model, the effective reproduction rate – the expected number of secondary cases that a single case generates – was estimated to be between 1.25 and 1.69, with an estimate of 1.47.

The current level of transmission could result in "exponential" growth, resulting in approximately 1,500 new daily cases over the next two weeks.

However, the model is based on Oregon data only through Nov. 6 and, even if Oregonians collectively wear masks, keep physical distance, restrict social gatherings and maintain good hand hygiene to slow the spread of the virus, new cases

would remain historically high for a short time before decreasing, Oregon Health Authority reported.

Those in their 20s, 30s and 40s account for the largest percentage of infection at 55 percent, despite making up only 39 percent of the total population. Those age 70 and older account for 74 percent of COVID deaths.

VACCINE NEWS

Two drug makers this week announced they have completed trials on vaccines that show a 94 or 95 percent effectiveness rate with no serious side effects. It's great news as coronavirus cases skyrocket around the globe.

The vaccine could be available as early as December.

Those longing to spend time with family and friends over the holidays should consider that refraining for just a little while longer could help ensure they'll still be around next year.

City of Warrenton Committee Vacancies

The City of Warrenton seeks people interested in applying for vacancies on the City's various committees. We have vacancies on the following boards:

- **Warrenton Budget Committee** - 2 positions (3 year term)
- **Warrenton Planning Commission** - 2 positions (4 year term)
- **Warrenton Community Center Board** - 4 positions (4 year term)
- **Warrenton Parks Advisory Board** - 2 positions (3 year term)
- **Warrenton Parks Advisory Board** - 1 vacancy (1 year term)
- **Warrenton Community Library Board** - 4 positions (4 year term)
- **Warrenton Urban Renewal Advisory Committee** - 3 positions (2 year term)

Applications are due by Nov. 30, 2020.

This is an excellent opportunity to participate in the important decisions affecting your community.

For more information and appointment qualifications go to the City's website at www.ci.warrenton.or.us, (click on the "Community" tab at top of the page and then "Citizen Involvement" from the drop-down menu). If you need additional information, please contact Dawne Shaw, City Recorder at 503- 861-0823 or via email at cityrecorder@ci.warrenton.or.us.

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