

Virus: 2020 was deadliest year in U.S. history

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"This is a huge decline," said Robert Anderson, who oversees the numbers for the CDC. "You have to go back to World War II, the 1940s, to find a decline like this."

Other health experts say it shows the profound impact of COVID-19, not just on deaths directly due to infection but also from heart disease, cancer and other conditions.

For those alive in 2021, the average life expectancy is now just under 78 years.

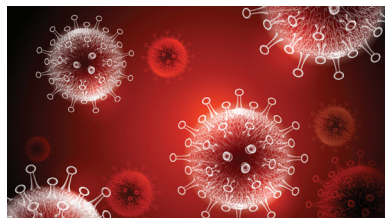
"What is really quite striking in these numbers is that they only reflect the first half of the year," said Dr. Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo of the University of California, San Francisco. "I would expect that these numbers would only get worse."

2020 was the deadliest year in U.S. history, with deaths topping 3 million for the first time.

VACCINES

The Oregon Health Authority informed Clatsop County that 1,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses will be delivered locally each week.

Seven hundred doses will go to the Public Health Department and 100 each will go to the Safeway-Astoria,



Safeway-Seaside and Costco pharmacies.

The pharmacies are scheduling vaccinations through their own online registration systems: safeway.com/pharmacy/covid-19.html for Safeway and costco.com/covid-vaccine.html for Costco.

OMINOUS MILESTONE

Gov. Kate Brown ordered all flags at Oregon public institutions to be flown at half-staff until sunset today, Feb. 26, in memory of the more than 500,000 Americans who have lost their lives to COVID-19. The statistic includes 2,171 Oregonians. "Every life lost to COVID-19 is a tragedy," Brown said. "My thoughts are with all those who have lost someone to this disease and, to all Oregonians, I want you to know I remain committed to ensuring that we do everything we can to stop the spread and save lives."

RESTAURANT FINED

The Little Brown Hen Café

in Florence was fined \$17,800 for willfully continuing to expose workers and patrons to the coronavirus disease.

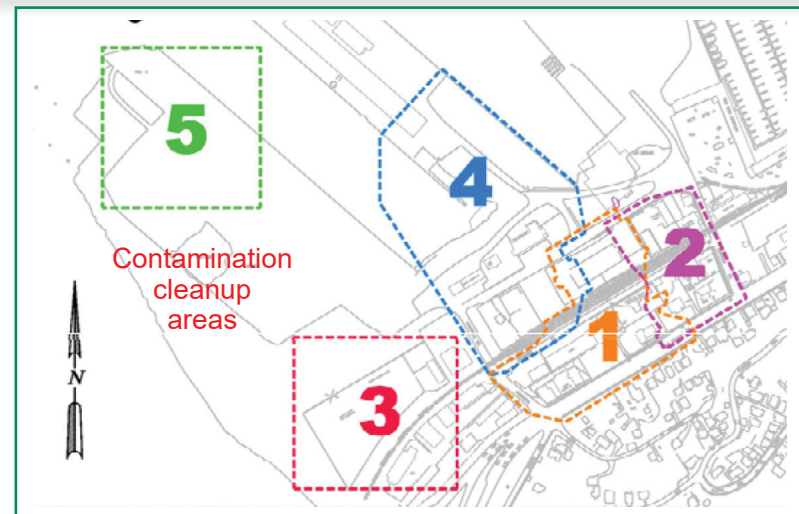
The business did so despite knowing it was violating a public health order restricting all indoor dining while Lane County was in the "extreme risk" category.

There had been multiple complaints about the business and inspectors from Oregon Occupational Safety and Health were met at the front door by several people who threatened them and blocked their entrance, including one carrying a firearm, state officials said.

The cafe had launched a campaign to keep restaurants from going under due to what it contends are overly restrictive state rules.

Using his discretionary authority under state law, OSHA Administrator Michael Wood imposed twice the minimum penalty for a willful violation. The decision reflects the need to ensure a more appropriate deterrent effect when employers insist on disregarding public health measures.

Such willful behavior puts employees at risk and enables the employer to achieve a competitive advantage over businesses that comply with health and safety standards, Wood said.



Port: Cleanup fees excessive

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Oil's tanks to the port's piers, and leaking underground storage tanks.

In 2001, DEQ determined the responsible parties were Chevron, Delphia Oil, Harris/Van West, McCall Oil, Niemi Oil/ExxonMobil, the Port of Astoria, Qwest and Shell Oil.

It took another 19 years -- before an agreement was reached between DEQ and all the parties, including the percentages each would pay. The port's share is 12 1/2 percent.

"It's been a long time that this has been worked on and one of my fears is that we have this agreement in place, but we live in a changing world," Isom said. "Maybe there will be changes at the port or DEQ that could affect this."

He has contacted state Sen.

Betsy Johnson, U.S. senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden, and U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici.

"This is highway robbery what they're doing to us," Port Commissioner James Campbell said.

"I hope we don't get billed for an article that could be written about this meeting," added Commission Chairman Dirk Rohne. He thanked Isom and his staff for taking on the issue.

It's complicated because there are so many parties involved, some of which are no longer in business or have been purchased by other companies, and it's unusual when a public entity is lumped in with private companies in one cleanup cluster, Isom said.

"The question isn't so much the legality of it, it's more so are we doing what's right," Isom said. "It doesn't pass the smell test. ... It's real hard for me to sign off on the check monthly when we at the port still have some staff on layoff."

So far, the parties have paid more than \$650,000 to the DEQ to cover its staff time, he said.

The agreement was "put in place 20 years ago and we still don't have remedies in place. We just keep paying and paying and we just need to find what the end game is."

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