

Hello world, you are listening to KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Carmen Jaramillo with local news and commentary for January 11, 2022.

The Hood Canal Bridge will be closed two nights this week from 11pm to 4am. The first closure is tomorrow night, Wednesday January 12 and the second closure will occur the next night on Thursday January 13. As with all Hood Canal Bridge closures for construction, they are weather dependent and may be rescheduled, so stay up to date on the Washington State Department of Transportation website (<https://wsdot.com/travel/real-time/hoodcanalbridgestatus>).

Two crashes occurred yesterday on Highway 104 outside of Port Ludlow causing major delays. The first occurred in the morning at roughly 8:30 when a FEDEX truck slid on the ice and jack-knifed right at the junction of 104 and 101. So if a FEDEX package you were expecting has suddenly become delayed, this could be the reason. The ramp from 104 to 101 was closed for approximately two hours.

The second crash occurred on Highway 104 near the Beaver Valley Road intersection at around 3:30pm when a semi-truck and car collided. Traffic was initially reduced to one lane but the highway was eventually closed in both directions, causing drivers to divert through Port Ludlow to Paradise Bay to access the Hood Canal Bridge. As of press time no information was available on the cause of the collision or the condition of the drivers.

And now for our weekly COVID-19 update from Dr. Allison Berry. The news this week is not good, she said, as cases continue to dramatically increase nationally and locally. We are seeing the highest rates of infection we have ever had in the past two years with Jefferson County Public Health reporting 125 cases yesterday. Our total confirmed case count has risen to 1,825. We have added 236 cases since my broadcast last Tuesday. Our local case rate has doubled each week for the previous two weeks. Last week we were at 416 cases per 100,000 residents. Today we are at 795 cases per 100,000 residents. 252 cases are in active isolation and five people are currently hospitalized.

Nationally, cases are up 216%. Take a look at any COVID-19 graph and you will see a line going pretty much straight up, magnitudes higher than any previous peak of cases. 650,000 people are testing positive for COVID-19 per day in the US. Hospitalizations in Washington state are up 95% and ICU capacity is once again reaching critical levels.

Some of our sharp increase in numbers is due to a large outbreak at Olympic Corrections Center, Berry said, where they have identified 40 cases, but that does not account for the entirety of the spike.

The news goes from bad to worse, as Berry predicts that this is just the beginning of the local omicron surge. Berry said public health believes the peak of transmission will not come until the end of the month, meaning that over the next several weeks we will most likely continue to set new records for cases. And because hospitalizations and deaths often lag behind case counts, Berry said she believes we will not see the peak of our hospitalizations until February. And with our hospital capacity already on the edge, Berry said the strain on hospitals will most likely continue well past February.

Berry is urging people to take all necessary precautions to limit the spread of the virus, including wearing a well fitting mask in public indoor spaces and getting vaccinated. She said now is also a very important time to limit

social contact with other people because that is the largest driver of transmission. People go over to their friend's house for coffee and they feel safer than they would in a crowded bar but you can still catch and transmit COVID-19. If we are able to hunker down for the next couple of weeks and get past the worst of this wave, we can help to slow the spread of transmission and potentially save lives.

Berry said the current strain on hospitals should give people pause, and that we may no longer have the kind of access to which we have become accustomed. Hospital workers were already running on fumes before this massive surge and now they are being hit harder than they ever have. There is a shortage of beds, staff, tests and medication. There will be fewer available appointments and longer wait times at the hospital. But if you need medical attention you should not be afraid to seek it.

Because of the surge in cases, there is also a surge in testing. Right now only those who have symptoms or know they have been exposed should try and access a test because they are so limited. President Joe Biden and Governor Jay Inslee have both said over the past couple of weeks that they are working to purchase and manufacture millions of at-home COVID-19 tests and distribute them to everyone who wants one. Berry said as of yet the health department is not sure what role if any they will play in distribution of these free tests but that they will keep the public informed.

That's all from me for today. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and five PM Monday through Thursday and at noon on Friday and Saturday. You can contact us through news@kptz.org. I'm Carmen Jaramillo. Thanks for listening.