

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Jim Burke, with local news for March 15, 2022.

Public Health Officer Dr. Allison Berry and Department of Emergency Management Director Willie Bence both spoke with the Board of County Commissioners yesterday, and answered questions. Dr. Berry said that overall things are good, yet we are still losing 1200 Americans every day to COVID-19. In Jefferson County, the current two week case rate is 189 per hundred thousand. Total case count: 3,120 since the pandemic began, 2 are hospitalized. There have been 28 deaths due to COVID-19 in Jefferson County since the pandemic began. In Clallam County, the current case rate is 132 per hundred thousand. Total number of cases: 10,875. 3 people are currently hospitalized, and there have been 105 deaths in Clallam County since the pandemic began.

We are now in the MODERATE risk category and although the mask mandates have been lifted, until we get to the LOW category, it is still recommended that we continue to mask indoors when ventilation is poor, and we don't know the vaccination status of all the people around us. When one mitigation is ended, there is a human tendency, she said, to do away with all mitigations, and throw caution to the wind. We can expect to see a small spike in cases a few weeks from now because of this, but we can reduce the severity of it and prevent another real surge if we continue with the other mitigations, which include testing, ventilation, distance, and contact tracing when cases are reported. She said the Health Department will be working closely with local schools to protect children, who are now the least vaccinated group. There will be a slow reduction in mask wearing, testing, contact tracing, and an emphasis on adequate ventilation.

Willie Bence pointed out that this is a good time for people who have been working on vaccine and testing clinics to take a well-deserved rest. He also said that the Department of Emergency Management is also working on organizing volunteers for the next thing, which could be another surge, or earthquake preparedness and response. He also lauded the legion of volunteers who have helped during the pandemic. Of course, you can listen to Dr. Berry and Willie Bence's remarks on our website at <https://kptz.org/kptz-local-news/>.

The Quilcene School District is continuing to plan for building a new school. Steven Murakami, vice president of design and construction for OAC, a Seattle-based design and construction management firm, sketched out possible floor plans in a meeting with district leaders and school staff and asked for ideas on what a new school would look like. This story was on the front page of the PT *Leader* this past week. That meeting was part of a greater outreach effort by the district as it tries again to get voters' support for Proposition 1, a 25-year bond proposal that funds construction of a new grade school building, a new career and technical education building, and to improve athletic facilities at the Quilcene Campus. The Referendum last month fell just short of 60% approval by 5 votes. Voters will get another chance to vote on the \$12.3 million bond proposal in April.

Through a partnership with the Washington Association of Community Health, Jefferson Healthcare is participating in a Medical Assistant Apprentice program. This on-the-job training program is part of a multi-prong approach supporting career opportunities for Jefferson County residents. The 18-month work-study program is a combination of online classes and hands-on training at Jefferson Healthcare. Each apprentice will have a coach to guide them through the program and prepare the apprentice to sit for the MA-C certification exam at the end of the program. The training program will begin with a state-wide cohort kick-off event on Thursday, April 14, 2022 and training begins Monday, April 18. No experience is necessary for applicants over the age of 18 with a high school diploma or equivalent and eligible to work in the US. Apprentices will be interviewed for their willingness to learn, ability to work well with others, and customer service skills. Jefferson

Healthcare will cover the \$3750 tuition costs through Return in Service, in exchange for staying in the MA-C role for two years. The paid position will be 40 hours a week and eligible for benefits. The deadline to apply through the online job portal on the Jefferson Healthcare website is TOMORROW, March 16. Go to <https://jeffersonhealthcare.org/healthcare-careers/> for more information.

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. This is Jim Burke. Thank you for listening.