

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Jim Burke, with local news for April 19, 2022.

Dr. Allison Berry and Willie Bence spoke to the Board Of County Commissioners yesterday for their weekly public health briefing. The two-week COVID-19 case rate in Jefferson County is 270 per hundred thousand; we are now at the HIGH level. The County and the CDC STRONGLY recommend, but still do not require, wearing masks in indoor public spaces. For two weeks now, no one has been hospitalized and there have been 3,327 cases since the pandemic began. We have lost 28 of our fellow citizens to COVID-19 in Jefferson County since the beginning of the pandemic.

Dr. Berry said yesterday, that even if the case rate remains high, the County won't consider a mask mandate again unless or until there is an increase in hospitalizations and/or deaths. What tempers the so-so news of the increase of cases, is that the BA-1 and the now-dominant BA-2 omicron strains of COVID-19, though more contagious, are less severe. "If we saw (hospitalizations rise) in other parts of the country, that might change our mitigations here....that's really the trigger," Dr. Berry said.

The following was not aired, but contains a useful link: Our positivity rate is up to 8.5%. In Jefferson county, there is an online form where people can submit a positive home test. Dr. Berry said that between 70-90% of cases reported are from home antigen tests. Here is a link to a site where you can securely report your test results: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/5b381c224d8d45459c67c39ffa305f8f>.

Dr. Berry said they will be adding a link to the Clallam County public health website to report positive Covid test results. The numbers in Clallam County seem close to what they were last week (this might be due to underreporting of positive test results).

This next item is from the Jefferson County Solid Waste Website (<https://jeffersoncountysolidwaste.com/recycle/recycling-changes/>). As you might have heard by now, there are some changes coming up about what plastics we can and cannot recycle. Beginning June 1, 2022, bottles and jugs will be the only types of plastic accepted for recycling in Jefferson County Washington. You can view the new recycling flyer here: <https://solidwaste.files.wordpress.com/2022/03/new-2022-recycling-flyer.pdf>.

Why are they changing what plastics they take? In short, dairy tubs, plant pots, and buckets are being sent overseas where there is no way of knowing their fate. Most likely, they are not being handled in an environmentally responsible way in a third-world country. In 2015, Jefferson County Solid Waste was assured that these plastics had a sustainable market, so they made the switch. They now know there is no market for these plastics, so they are going back to the bottles and jugs which were accepted from 1992 to 2015. They hope that accepting only plastic bottles and jugs will simplify what is recyclable in the plastic and cans bin. Acceptable examples are: bottles that contain beverages like water and juice; shampoo and body lotion bottles; jugs that contain dish soap or laundry detergent.

So make sure your bottles and jugs are clean and empty so they don't contaminate all the good ones. And please remove the cap as it can be a hazard to the workers nearby when the plastic is compacted into a bale for shipment. According to the sorting facility in Tacoma, bottles and jugs are recycled at end markets on the west coast (British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, or California). When plastic bottles are recycled, they can be made into lots of things: t-shirts, sweaters, fleece jackets, insulation for jackets and sleeping bags, carpeting and more bottles!

Do not try to recycle plastic bottles that have contained hazardous materials like motor oil, antifreeze, weed killer, etc. These must go in the trash. And if these containers still have hazardous material in them, take them to the Hazardous Waste Collection facility at the Boat Haven. For more information, click on the flyer here (<https://solidwaste.files.wordpress.com/2022/02/mrw-flyer-2022.pdf>).

Contamination is a BIG problem! The plastic contamination rate in the county has been very high since the change in 2015. Below is a photo example of plastics that have never been recyclable in the current system but continue to be put in bins by citizens:



You can see lids (which were never recyclable), a plastic rake head (not recyclable), a cardboard drink holder (not even plastic), plastic wrappers for toilet paper, lids from coffee cups. Basically, there are only a couple of things in this picture that are recyclable at this time, and even they won't be come June.

So, keep it simple: Jugs, bottles (no caps). Clean them, put them in the recycling bin and, well, that's the way it is, folks!

Here are some other items that are non-recyclable:

- Blue glass. Clear, green, and brown bottles only.
- Pyrex and other types of tempered glass. No Window glass, mirrors, light bulbs.
- Any Tetra-pak or beverage cartons – they are not recyclable because they contain paper, plastic, and aluminum in laminated layers.
- Even the milk carton you have has a layer of plastic. Crush it and put it in the trash.

In Seattle, there has been recycling of a wide variety of materials for several years now. They have a highly sophisticated system for handling plastic and all sorts of materials. They are a huge city with a lot of resources to do that. Jefferson County does not have those kinds of resources.

You can view a Zoom presentation about these important changes to the curbside recycling program Saturday, April 23 from 10-11am:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83779897976?pwd=RVdNQm5Ta3R3RUE1c2d5czVuQ1pxdz09>

Meeting ID: 837 7989 7976, Passcode: 668859

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and five 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, and have a good Tuesday.