

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend Washington. I'm Ann Katzenbach with local news and commentary for today, November 10, 2022.

December through mid-February are the key months for virus infection. Viruses tend to enter through the mouth and nose, but our nasal passages usually have strong defenses against them. The cold weather, however, slows down our ability to clear the mucus in our noses, making it easier for viruses to get in. Risks for infection can also increase in winter because most of us spend a lot of time indoors, often gathering closely in spaces that may offer less-than-ideal ventilation and cramped personal space.

So now as we head into flu season, RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) has come onto our list of winter threats. It isn't a new virus, and it acts very much like the common cold, but it can turn quickly into pneumonia, especially in very young children and seniors. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, from October 15 to 22, nationally, there were a total of 7,334 positive RSV results. This has raised some warning flags. Dawn O'Connell assistant Health and Human Services secretary for preparedness and response told reporters last Friday, "With increased RSV infections, a rising number of flu cases and the ongoing burden of covid-19 in our communities, there's no doubt we will face some challenges this winter."

At Children's Hospital in Chicago where RSV cases are surging and flu cases are starting to rise, Tina Tan, a pediatric infectious disease specialist told the *Washington Post*, "Covid has impacted the seasonal patterns of all these respiratory infections. Whether the pattern will go back to the way it was pre-covid, I don't think anyone really knows, but it does make it more complicated to provide the care that people need when you have three viruses that can cause serious diseases surging at the same time." Public health officials urge parents and families to take precautions now in order to be healthy and to avoid putting strain on hospital systems.

At the moment the winter seasonal flu and its associated infections are not alarming. Jefferson and Clallam counties report moderate COVID-19 case rates with one person hospitalized in each county. There are plenty of events and meetings (even live ones) giving a sense of normalcy to life as we head towards Thanksgiving.

An event that has been waiting in the wings since 2020 is a performance by the Community Chorus. Singing that requires so much breathing is one of the most virulent spreaders of COVID-19, so there has been a long hiatus for the chorus. They are now rehearsing with masks and will wear masks during their weekend performances at the First Presbyterian Church on Friday at 7pm and at Trinity Lutheran Church on Sunday at 3pm. The Wild Rose Chorale will join the chorus for three songs and perform a set of its own a cappella music. Lynn Nowak writes in a *Leader* article, "Masks are indeed an obstacle, but most singers say that wearing them is infinitely better than not singing."

Tomorrow is Veteran's Day. The county and city libraries will be closed as will City Offices and post offices. And the county transfer station on Jacob Miller Road will be closed tomorrow and Saturday, November 12. It will reopen on Tuesday, November 15 at 9am. Most veteran's day celebrations are being held today.

The list of 2023 twelve free days at state parks has been announced by the Washington State Parks. You can find this list at <https://www.discoverpass.wa.gov/>. One of these free days, March 9, honors the birthday of Billy

Frank, Jr. For those who don't know of this Native American environmental leader who died in 2014 at the age of 83, he was one of the first people to help bridge the gap between federal laws and native treaty rights. He was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama.

And that's it for today's news. 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5pm, Monday through Friday and at noon on Friday and Saturday. You can contact us through news at KPTZ.org. I'm Ann Katzenbach.