

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, May 23, 2023.

Overnight travelers on the State Route 104 Hood Canal Bridge won't have to worry about any closures the rest of this week. Contractor crews working on the center lock mechanism completed the reinstallation of the bridge's pyramid early morning Sunday, May 21. This means the closures scheduled for 11pm each night yesterday, Monday, May 22 through Wednesday, May 24 are no longer needed. Instead, the bridge will operate as normal. The span will remain open to traffic subject to typical closures for marine vessels.

Night work on the Hood Canal Bridge resumes June 6 for a lighting improvement project. The bridge will close to traffic 11pm each night Tuesday, June 6 through Thursday, June 8 and reopen to traffic at 4am each following day. Emergency services will have access to the bridge during these closures. The full schedule of night work is available on the project webpage. Real-time news on SR 104 Hood Canal Bridge closures is available on Hoodcanalbridge.com (<https://wsdot.com/travel/real-time/hoodcanalbridgestatus>), the WSDOT app, and the WSDOT regional Twitter feed.

On May 17, 2023, WA State Department of Health implemented a new definition that changes how they track COVID-19 deaths on the COVID-19 Data Dashboard and in published reports. The new definition for COVID-19 deaths results in some adjustments to death counts and rates, but overall changes are minimal. The new definition is more accurate and creates standardization of COVID-19 death classification moving forward. No new COVID-19 deaths were reported. The number of deaths reported on the Jefferson County website is 37, however the state website now says the total number of deaths in Jefferson County due to COVID-19 is 43.

The following information was updated on the Jefferson County Public Health website last Thursday, May 18: The level of COVID-19 virus present in Port Townsend wastewater is currently 1.8 billion copies of the SARS-CoV-2 gene per person, per day. That data indicates a downward trend in the presence of COVID-19 in our community. There have been 5,109 cases of COVID-19 in Jefferson County since the pandemic began. Regardless of underreported case numbers of late, that total case number continues to rise and indicates COVID-19 is still present in our community.

The Washington State Department of Health website reports the two-week COVID-19 case rate in Jefferson County is approximately 102 cases per 100,000.

In neighboring Clallam County there have been 16,141 cases and 211 deaths due to COVID-19 since the pandemic began. Jefferson County Public Health staff recommend wearing a mask in all indoor settings when: You're sick, those around you are sick, the indoor space you're in is crowded and not well ventilated, or you care for people who are vulnerable to severe illness, such as those 65 and older or who are immunocompromised. Anyone who manages a publicly-accessible space may require members of the public to wear a mask. Please continue to respect the rules of the room you're in.

Dr. Allison Berry and Director of Emergency Management Willie Bence will speak to the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners Monday, June 5 and answer questions from them and from you, our listeners. If you would like to ask a question of Dr. Berry or Willie Bence, send an email to contactus@kptz.org by noon Friday, June 3.

Brendan Ross, a private pilot who took off yesterday from the airport in Port Townsend in a Cessna 172, and experiencing engine trouble on the way to Auburn, made the decision to ditch in Elliott Bay. In a report on KIRO-7 TV News, Ross claimed that after his plane hit the water, he equalized the pressure on the plane by opening the window. Then he opened the door and went into the cold water. Two men having beers on a boat plucked him out of the water and he wound up in Harborview with relatively minor injuries to his face. At the time of the interview the plane was still submerged in 75 feet of water. The NTSB could take up to a year to issue findings on the cause of the crash. Ross seemed quite chipper during the interview and is looking forward to flying again. He's a certified instructor and will soon have a commercial pilot's license. He certainly kept his cool under pressure.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and five Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us through news@kptz.org. This is Jim Burke. Thank you for listening!