

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, June 13, 2023.

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Yesterday, June 12, U.S. Representative Derek Kilmer (WA-06) announced a \$13.8 million award for Jefferson County Public Utility Service No. 1 (PUD). The award, including an approximately \$9.2 million grant and \$4.6 million loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture ReConnect Loan and Grant Program (<https://www.usda.gov/reconnect>), will support Jefferson County's plan to bring high-speed internet to rural electric customers without access.

Rep. Kilmer said, "We know that access to the internet isn't just about whether you can stream *The Mandalorian* on Disney Plus. It's about whether you can have a telehealth appointment or take an online class or participate in an online meeting. And in our neck of the woods, too many folks can't because internet infrastructure hasn't reached them. That's why these investments matter. Federal dollars for projects like these go a long way in connecting folks. This funding for Jefferson County PUD No. 1 will soon bring high-speed internet to more than 650 additional households, all without the costs falling on the backs of local ratepayers and taxpayers."

Jefferson County PUD General Manager Kevin Streett said, "During the pandemic, it became clear to our rural public utility that access to the internet was an essential service. In 2021, Jefferson County PUD set a goal of building fiber internet to every home and business in our electric service territory that can't get access to broadband."

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As our climate changes, the threat of wildfires looms larger every year. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is urging the public to prepare now for smoke that can make air unhealthy to breathe. Smoke Ready Week, observed June 12-16, is an opportunity to take proactive steps to protect yourself and your family. Kaitlyn Kelly, who has a Masters of Public Health and is an Air Quality Policy Specialist with DOH, said, "We are expecting to have above normal fire activity in Washington by July. We have an outlook for below normal precipitation and that's going to last into fall, so conditions are trending to a long fire season," She continued, "It's important to know what is in wildfire smoke and why it can be bad for your health."

Smoke from wildfires contains fine particles and gasses including carbon monoxide. Those with pre-existing conditions, infants and children, pregnant individuals, adults 65 and older, and people with heart and lung disease can be most sensitive to wildfire smoke. Minor symptoms can include headaches, stinging eyes, runny nose, and trouble breathing.

When smoke arrives it's important to reduce exposure by staying up to date on the forecast and air quality index, limiting time outside, and keeping indoor air as clean as possible. After several days smoke can enter homes and buildings through leaky gaps in windows and doors. Having a way to filter indoor air will benefit your health. It's key to buy supplies in advance because they often sell out quickly when it's smoky out. Filter indoor air by using a:

- HVAC system with MERV 13 filter.
- HEPA portable air cleaner.
- DIY box fan filter (<https://www.pscleanair.gov/525/DIY-Air-Filter>). It's pretty simple: It involves taping a 20 x 20 furnace air filter to a simple window box fan, and it a low-cost alternative to a more expensive room air purifier.

You can stay updated on wildfires, air quality, the forecast, and health information on the WA Smoke Blog (<https://wasmoke.blogspot.com/>). For more information on how to protect yourself from wildfire smoke, visit the DOH's Smoke from Fires webpage (<https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/air-quality/smoke-fires>).

The DOH website (<https://doh.wa.gov>) is your source for a healthy dose of information. Find them on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/WADeptHealth>) and follow them on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/wadepthealth>). Sign up for the DOH blog, Public Health Connection (<https://medium.com/wadepthealth>).

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One last thing. As reported by the Associated Press, actor Treat Williams, whose nearly 50-year career included starring roles in the TV series “Everwood” and the movie “Hair,” died yesterday, Monday June 12, after a motorcycle crash in Vermont, state police said. He was 71. Shortly before 5pm, a Honda SUV was turning left into a parking lot when it collided with Williams’ motorcycle in the town of Dorset, according to a statement from Vermont State Police. “Williams was unable to avoid a collision and was thrown from his motorcycle. He suffered critical injuries and was airlifted to Albany Medical Center in Albany, New York, where he was pronounced dead.” according to the statement.

I (this reporter) was driving over the mountains this weekend on Route 2 and noticed some motorcycles have extra lights on the front to make them more visible, and some don’t. Please look twice before making any turns around motorcycles and, if you are following one, remember that they can stop in a shorter distance than a car or truck, so give them space and PLEASE SEE motorcycles – and BICYCLES TOO while you’re at it.

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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](mailto:news@kptz.org). This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening!