

At 91.9 FM KPTZ Port Townsend, I'm Diane Urbani de la Paz with local news and commentary for Friday, July 21.

The *Peninsula Daily News* reported on a massive residential explosion Tuesday evening on June Place in Sequim. June Place is a cul de sac in the Woodcock-Kitchen-Dick Road area. A deceased man's body was found inside the rubble. The blast destroyed the house and blew out the windows of at least three neighboring homes. Two people nearby suffered minor injuries, and a small dog from the house survived. Neighbors said the explosion sounded like a bomb; a sonic boom; a car crash, a freight train. Undersheriff Ron Cameron said there was no evidence of foul play, but as of yet no determined cause either.

Also in Sequim, it's the town's biggest celebration of the year starting today. The Lavender Weekend is on, with a festival of vendors in the park, a street dance, a quilt show, two barn dances, and yes, 18 lavender farms open for touring. There are the older ones such as Purple Haze and Jardin du Soleil. And there are three new farms on the circuit: Gnomelicious Lavender Farm, Old Barn Lavender Company, and Olympic Bluffs Cidery and Lavender Farm. The website for all things purple and herbal is <https://www.visitsunnysequim.com/166/Lavender-Weekend-and-2023-Lavender-Season>.

The Washington State Patrol is noting an alarming number of fatality collisions over the past week. This is in the middle of the statewide "Surviving Summer" traffic safety campaign, which aims to bring attention to the 90 most dangerous days on Washington roadways. The state patrol has investigated fatality collisions across the state that resulted in the loss of 15 lives over the weekend, including six people killed in Tacoma and another three killed in a crash outside Othello. In addition, the state patrol investigated three more fatality collisions since Monday. All of them involved the deaths of motorcyclists. The top contributors to the summertime collisions have historically been excessive speed, impairment from alcohol and other drugs, failing to grant the right of way, and driving while distracted.

State troopers investigated 314 fatalities in 2022. Slightly over one-third involved impairment from substances. About a quarter of them involved speed, and 31% involved people not wearing their seatbelts. Mark McKechnie of the Washington State Traffic Commission said, "We can all make choices that make our roads safer. We buckle up and put the phones down. We drive sober and encourage others to do the same. We can also ease off the gas a little, and we'll get to our destinations safely."

We have another mountain lion story that ends better than the cougar fatality earlier this week. Multiple sources are reporting that a cougar attacked a dog near Lake Cushman on Wednesday morning. The Mason County Sheriff's Office said that the dog is expected to be OK. A man was walking with this small dog on a leash when Terry Hutchinson, a neighbor, stopped to talk to him. Hutchinson said, "This cougar shot out of the woods. It just grabbed his dog and pulled him to the ground." Hutchinson, who has lived at Lake Cushman since 1987, said she has seen bears before, but never cougars. She always tries to have an air horn in case she sees a bear. "I took out my air horn and ran it out of air," she said. "The cougar let go of the dog and took off."

The Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife tried to find the cat. After searching the area around where the attack happened for several hours, officers and search dogs found cougar tracks heading into the

forest and away from homes. They have no further plans to attempt to try to track, capture, or kill the cougar. Cougar-to-human interactions are rare in the northwest. But if you encounter one, officials give this advice: Do not run. Make noise and make yourself look as large as possible. If you are attacked, fight back. And finally, carry bear spray.

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 Diane Urbani de la Paz. Thanks for listening.