

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, August 1, 2023.

The new alert system will begin operations on Tuesday Aug. 1 – that's today – and is scheduled for a two-year pilot and evaluation period. The Hit and Run Alert System is a program of cooperation among state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies, along with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to enhance the ability to identify and recover a fleeing vehicle involved in a serious injury or fatality hit-and-run collision. WSP Chief John R. Batiste said, "Last year, our state saw over 300 hit-and-run collisions resulting in serious injury or death. In many of those situations, information about the fleeing vehicle was available that, if widely disseminated, might have helped us find a dangerous driver."

For a Hit-and-Run Alert to be activated, the following criterion would need to be met:

- A hit-and-run collision resulting in serious injury or death.
- Enough descriptive information available to assist in locating the suspect vehicle (such as a full or partial license plate, a description of the vehicle and any possible damage, location and direction of travel, etc.)
- The incident has been reported and is being investigated by a law enforcement agency.

Chief Batiste also said, "If you see or hear the alert and then see what you think might be the suspect vehicle, call 911 and report your location. DO NOT ENGAGE with the vehicle or driver under any circumstances. Let our troopers and our fine local law enforcement officers do their jobs in safely and professionally contacting suspect vehicles."

The most recent monthly COVID dashboard report on the Jefferson County Public Health website, dated June 14, said the level of COVID-19 virus present in Port Townsend wastewater was then 403 million copies of the SARS-CoV-2 gene per person, per day. That data indicated a downward trend in the presence of COVID-19 in our community. That was nearly the lowest number on that data dashboard for all this year, very close to a low number in January.

Since June, however, by the third week of July, the level rose to more than 2 and a quarter billion copies of the COVID-19 virus present in Jefferson County wastewater (specifically Port Townsend) per person per day. This reporter, aged 65 with one or two underlying health conditions, went to a crowded gallery opening on June 29, and decided to leave my mask in the car. A big mistake. I tested positive on July 3 after symptoms started on Sunday, July 2. I did not receive a second dose of the bi-valent booster in June when I had the opportunity. I took Paxlovid, which helped, but I was informed that when the symptoms rebound after the Paxlovid runs out, that my quarantine clock had to start over again: an additional 5 days at home and another 5 days masked everywhere in public. All in all, it was 21 days before I could really go out and about, and I did test negative after 23 days. So, the guy who has been reminding you all to wear a mask in crowded indoor public spaces, did not, and I have suffered the consequences.

Dr. Allison Berry will speak to the Board of Jefferson County Commissioners this Monday, August 7. If you have a question about the current state of things COVID-wise or another Public Health concern, send an email to contactus@kptz.org by this Friday, August 4 before noon to be answered next Monday at 9:45am during the Jim B. Show.

And, last but not least, last Saturday, July 29 I attended one of the Jazz concerts at McCurdy Pavilion, part of Centrum's Jazz Port Townsend. This concert included a big band and several smaller jazz ensembles, plus a celebration of the life of Chuck Deardorf. Artistic Director John Clayton, who plays bass – to put it mildly – was also the musical director of the concert, playing and conducting throughout the program. He was joined by Tia Fuller on sax, Terrell Stafford on trumpet, George Cables on piano, and Lewis Nash on drums for the first set. Other notable musicians in the second set, which was the tribute to Chuck Deardorf, included Ben Thomas on vibes, Dawn Clement on Piano and vocals, and Mike Brockman on tenor sax. Part of the tribute included a 19-member showcase of bass – seriously, 19 basses – with John Clayton conducting a piece written to honor Chuck Deardorf. Here's a snippet: [audio sample]

The big band part of the concert included soloists David Sanchez on tenor sax and Wylyffe Gordon on trombone. A beautiful concert!

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening!