

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, August 8, 2023.

Last evening, while looking for detailed COVID-19 information on the Jefferson County website, I encountered this message: "Please be advised: All Jefferson County email accounts have been experiencing technical difficulties. We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused and are working diligently to resolve the issue quickly. If you have sent a time-sensitive email, a public records request, or a request for public comment to a Jefferson County email address since 10am on Friday, August 4, it is likely that it was not received by its intended recipient. Thank you for your patience. If you are not getting the timely response that is required, call the department or office in question or show up in-person. You are always welcome." Jefferson County Public Health is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 4:30pm. You can call them directly at 360-385-9400.

The most recent monthly COVID dashboard report on The Jefferson County Public Health website, dated July 19, said there were 2.4 billion copies of the SARS-COV-2 gene per person, per day in Port Townsend wastewater. That data indicated an upward trend in the presence of COVID-19 in our community as KPTZ News reported last week. Since that time, however those numbers have fallen off, which brings us to the Board of County Commissioners meeting yesterday, August 7 and reports from Director of Emergency Management Willie Bence and Public Health Officer for Jefferson and Clallam Counties, Dr. Allison Berry.

For the response and work that was done last Tuesday night, August 1 on the wildfire that broke out on Beaver Valley Road, Willie Bence thanked East Jefferson Fire Rescue, Kitsap Fire and Rescue who sent two crews, Jefferson County Sheriff's Department for coordination at the scene, and Washington state DNR who mopped up when the fire was put out. He said there were numerous complaints about the alerts that went out, which in some cases contained evacuation notices, and in some cases went on for days. He explained the different tiers of NIXLE Alerts which are a subscription service, in use by 3,000 (or 9,000 people depending on the levels at which people subscribe) and there are non-subscription alerts.

IPAWS is the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (a FEMA program) which local jurisdictions use to warn people through the EAS (Emergency Alert System) through TV and radio, and WEA (Wireless Emergency Alerts) which go to all cell phones unless they are turned off by the individual user. He recommended that people leave those alerts on, as they are the highest-level alerts and can warn of imminent danger, but he also reminded people that if they mark those alerts as read, then they don't usually repeat, but still sometimes do when you travel between cell towers. He said Jefferson County DOE is working on trying to stop the alerts when they are no longer needed, so they don't repeat for days after an event.

Dr. Berry, of course had the latest Covid numbers and information about vaccines available in the fall for anyone over 60 and they include the flu vaccine, a COVID-19 XBB booster which covers most of the current Omicron variants and a new vaccine for RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus.)

There was one Covid death in Jefferson County this past month of a patient in their 90s who was not vaccinated. That brings the death count here to 40.

She went on to answer listener questions including one about Vaccines and Mammography, and pointed out that vaccines can cause lymph nodes in the armpits to enlarge. She assured everyone that Radiologists have been

acutely aware that this normal immune response can show up in mammograms and the pandemic has brought this issue into focus. If you can time the vaccinations and the mammograms a few weeks apart, that's great, but if you cannot, go ahead and do both when you can. She stressed that both are very important. For the full Public Health Report from Dr. Berry and Willie Bence you can listen on our website KPTZ.org.

One last thing: There were two serious accidents just yesterday on US Highway 101 here on the Olympic Peninsula. And sadly, last evening at approximately 6:45pm on US 101 near Louella Road at a place where the highway curves to the left, a 61-year-old woman from Sequim kept going straight over an embankment and down 40 feet. The car landed on its roof and the woman was pronounced dead at scene. She was not wearing a seat belt.

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 and please be careful out there.