

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, October 3, 2023.

KPTZ news and other news outlets received a message last week from FEMA: The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Communications Commission will conduct a nationwide test of the emergency alert system tomorrow, Wednesday, October 4. The test messages will be sent to all cellphones, televisions, and radios. The test will emit sound – and on phones – vibration. The NPR website provided some context: They are running the test in preparation for actual emergencies. The aim of the test is to ensure the emergency messaging system is running smoothly in the event Americans are threatened by natural disasters, terrorism, or other dangers to public safety.

You may be familiar with the jolting sounds that accompany National Weather Service alerts and AMBER (America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response) alerts. Wednesday's cellphone alerts will be sent via the same wireless system. The test is scheduled to begin at about 2:20pm Eastern Time on Wednesday, October 4. The testing window runs for 30 minutes, but you should only receive the message once. If an actual emergency happens that day, the test could be postponed. A backup test is scheduled for the following week.

- On cellphones, the alert will read: "THIS IS A TEST of the National Wireless Emergency Alert System (WEA). No action is needed."
- Phones set to Spanish will display: "ESTA ES UNA PRUEBA del Sistema Nacional de Alerta de Emergencia. No se necesita acción."
- TV and radio will announce: "This is a nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System, issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, covering the United States from 14:20 to 14:50 hours Eastern Time (that's 11:20am until 11:50am Pacific Daylight Time). This is only a test. No action is required by the public."

FEMA is required by law to conduct national tests of the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) at least once every three years. The last national test was in 2021. According to FEMA, all wireless phones should receive the message only once. To help ensure that these alerts are accessible to the entire public, including people with disabilities, the alerts are accompanied by a unique tone and vibration.

Yesterday morning, the Public Health briefing at this week's Board of County Commissioners meeting came from Jefferson and Clallam County Public Health Officer Dr. Allison Berry. Anna Piasecki, Program Coordinator, sat in for Willie Bence, Director of Emergency Management, and gave a report as well. She spoke about the GREAT SHAKOUT, the earthquake preparedness drill taking place on October 19 at 10:19am.

Dr. Berry said we are in the midst of a real COVID-19 surge here now. Across the United States, cases have plateaued so we should level off here too in the coming weeks. Unfortunately, the booster shots have been in short supply, but are slowly becoming more available. And she mentioned that without insurance the shot could cost between \$110 and \$130. Then she emphasized that no one should go without. The shots are covered by private health insurance, Medicaid, and Medicare, but if anyone is without insurance, Jefferson County Public Health will take care of you.

Anyone who has had a recent case should wait two months before seeking the booster. Flu and RSV shots are available now, and those cases are low right now. The RSV vaccine costs twice as much as the Covid booster, but insurance should cover that; the County cannot.

Anyone who wants to lessen side effects can space out the vaccine shots by a couple of weeks, but the COVID-19 booster should be first as COVID-19 cases are everywhere now in the community. The entire report can be heard at KPTZ.org (<https://kptz.org/2023/10/02/county-public-health-report-10-02-23/>).

And, at approximately 10:30 Sunday night, a driver heading westbound, driving a black 1994 Honda Civic on the Hood Canal Bridge veered over the fog line, struck the concrete barrier, and flipped over, landing the car on its roof at about mid-span. When law enforcement arrived they found the car was unoccupied. A Coast Guard helicopter searched the scene and the water around the bridge, but they could not find the occupant or occupants of the car. According to radio station KONP, Trooper Katherine Weatherwax said Monday morning the driver and passenger were eventually tracked down. They told troopers a family friend was driving behind them and struck them going 80mph, causing them to flip. They left the scene in the friend's vehicle. Weatherwax said it is still under investigation, and she suspects both parties will be charged with Hit and Run.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening.