

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with your local news and commentary for Friday, February 2, 2024.

It is Ground Hog Day and in case you were wondering, Punxsatawney Phil did not see his shadow this morning and therefore we are done with winter – according to Punxsatawney Phil in Pennsylvania, who is wrong 33% of the time...which means that he's right 67% of the time, which is a pretty good percentage. Anyway, take it with a grain of salt. It's just a rodent that they pull out of the ground.

During the evening hours of Wednesday, February 7, people who use US 101 between Blyn and Gardiner will want to plan additional travel time. Weather permitting, construction crews working for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) will temporarily relocate the highway onto a two-lane bypass road from 8pm Wednesday, February 7 to 6am Thursday, February 8. There will be one-way alternating traffic approaching the work zone, unscheduled traffic stops for up to ten minutes, and the work is weather-dependent and could be rescheduled. The existing 55 mph and 45 mph speed limits will be lowered to 35 mph between milepost 271.6 and 272.6. The temporary speed limit reduction will occur after traffic is shifted onto the two-lane bypass road.

The bypass road will keep people moving around the work zone throughout this coming summer. The work is part of a fish barrier removal project at Chicken Coop Creek. A nearby section of US 101 is also temporarily shifted onto a two-lane bypass road at Discovery Creek.

Whenever near work zones please:

- Slow down – drive the posted speeds, they're there for your safety.
- Be kind – WSDOT workers are out there helping to keep you safe and improve the roadways.
- Pay attention – both to workers directing you and surrounding traffic.
- Stay calm – leave early; no meeting or appointment is worth risking someone's life.

Real-time traveler information is available from the WSDOT app and WSDOT Travel Center Map (<https://wsdot.com/Travel/Real-time/Map/>).

And, from Washington State Ferries and WashDOT: An early heads up if you use the State Route 305 Agate Pass Bridge to access the Seattle/Bainbridge route! On Tuesday, February 20 through Friday, February 23 the bridge will be reduced to one alternating lane of traffic from 9am to 2pm daily, for annual bridge cleaning work. Travelers can expect 30-minute delays, if not more. Consider traveling early or late in the day or reschedule discretionary trips. Other alternatives include taking the Bremerton or Kingston ferries.

Also, in the Washington State Ferries (WSF) newsletter: As KPTZ news has mentioned numerous times, there is a world-wide shortage of mariners which is part of the reason that ferry service in the Puget Sound has been curtailed since the pandemic began. In addition to hiring new employees, Washington State Ferries is also focused on advancing the careers of existing crewmembers to bring long-term stability to the workforce. The biggest crewing constraint right now is a lack of mates and captains and 50% of employees currently in these positions are retirement-eligible in the next five years. To stay ahead of this coming attrition, WSF started a new

able-bodied (AB) sailor-to-mate program last year that allows crewmembers interested in becoming a licensed deck officer with paid time off to take the necessary courses and exams on work time. On Friday, their third group of ABs graduated from the Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies program (otherwise known as MITAGS). This is the first of three steps WSF employees must complete to become a licensed mate. They have also partnered with MITAGS to offer scholarships for a two-year apprenticeship program (<https://www.mitags.org/maritime-apprenticeship-programs/>) to anyone interested in becoming a licensed deck officer. The first group begins this month.

And a program note. The Jim B. Show, Mondays from 9:30-11am, will have Dr. Allison Berry with her monthly Public Health Report the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners. That will be from 9:45 until 10:15. It's too late to get your listener questions in, but one listener question is "I think maybe there are more cases out there right now, but they seem milder. Is this true? What's the overall trend in severity of covid cases?" You can hear Dr. Berry answer this and other questions this coming Monday morning, February 5, during the Jim B. Show!

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.