

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Taylor Nations with local news and commentary for Tuesday, July 30, 2024.

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Yesterday Jim Burke spoke with Dr. Allison Berry, Chief Health officer for Jefferson and Clallam Counties on *Attention Please!* here on KPTZ. Dr. Berry confirmed that there is in fact a nationwide surge in COVID-19 infections including here in Jefferson and Clallam Counties. Wastewater surveillance in Port Townsend is the metric used to determine the amount of the virus present in the community. She said the levels detected in wastewater are higher than they have been in a year, including last winter. The COVID infections are relatively mild. But if anyone is experiencing flu-like symptoms, it's not the flu, Dr. Berry says and a Covid test is highly recommended. Free Covid tests are still available at Jefferson County Public Health, Fire stations, and local libraries. The next Covid booster vaccine will be available in September or October. It is recommended that people should wait for those boosters, unless they are unvaccinated, or severely immunocompromised.

Speaking of vaccinations, now is the time to make sure that all children returning to school in September are vaccinated against measles mumps and rubella (the MMR vaccine) and "whooping cough" or pertussis. Jefferson County Public Health can help. Go to <https://co.jefferson.wa.us/202/Public-Health> for more information.

To hear the entire interview with Dr. Berry go to the KPTZ website and click on PODCASTS and click ATTENTION PLEASE!

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The Park Fire in northern California, as reported by multiple news outlets, is likely to burn for several more weeks. Over 3,800 firefighters are battling the blaze which as of Saturday had burned over 307,000 acres, which converts to 480 square miles which is over 26% of the land area of Jefferson County (1803.7 square miles).

A 42-year-old man, Ronnie Dean Stout II, has been arrested and accused of igniting the Park Fire. Stout is suspected of pushing a burning car 60 feet into a gully, spreading flames that caused the inferno, Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said. Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at the University of California, Los Angeles, warned that another prolonged heat wave was forecast for the fire zone this week. Mr. Swain is quoted in the *New York Times* as saying, "This fire will likely be burning for weeks, if not months," and added there is "almost no possibility" that the fire would be contained any time in the near future.

Last week East Jefferson Fire Rescue updated the fire danger level in Jefferson County to VERY HIGH. This means no outdoor burning of any kind except for propane grills.

And...at approximately 8pm Saturday evening, East Jefferson Fire Rescue (EJFR) responded to a report of a vegetation fire in the Shine area near Highway 104. Several EJFR units were committed to other 911 calls in the area at the time of dispatch. So the Battalion Chief immediately requested support from the Poulsbo Fire Department. Engines from Port Ludlow, Quilcene, Chimacum, and Port Townsend responded, totaling 17 on-duty firefighters assigned to fight the blaze. Poulsbo Engine 72 reported a working fire as they made the turn onto the bridge from Kitsap County.

The first arriving crews found two travel trailers fully engulfed in a fire. Narrow driveway access and unmaintained vegetation made firefighting a challenge. There were no fire hydrants in the vicinity which triggered mobilization of EJFR's volunteer corps, who staffed the air/rehab unit and the district's fleet of water

tenders. Several off-duty firefighters responded from home to augment the response. The fire was contained at 8:45pm. The trailers were not occupied at the time and no injuries were reported.

Jefferson County residents are reminded to clear dead and dying vegetation from around your home which gives the firefighters the best chance to extinguish a fire. More wildfire safety measures can be found in a link on the transcript of this newscast: <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/wildfirereadyneighbors>. The cause of the fire is being investigated by the Jefferson County Fire Marshal's Office.

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And it's one week until Primary election day, August 6, in Washington State so this is your reminder to fill out your ballot and send it in. For more information go to VOTEWA.gov (<https://voter.votewa.gov/portal2023/login.aspx>).

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KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can reach out to us at [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). This is Taylor Nations. Thank you for listening.