

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke with local news and commentary for Tuesday, October 8 2024.

Yesterday was a report to the Board of County Commissioners of Jefferson County from Dr. Allison Berry, Chief Public Health Officer for Clallum and Jefferson Counties, and Director of Emergency Management for Jefferson County, Willie Bence.

This is what Dr. Allison Berry had to say about the current state of things. "So, on the respiratory front, we finally have a bit of good news. We are finally seeing a downtrend in emergency department visits and hospitalizations for COVID-19 in our region, and our wastewater detection of COVID-19 is also downtrending. So that's all hopeful news. We're seeing an improvement from where we were in the last couple of months. We do expect that to turn around at some point and see another surge in the fall and winter but the exact timing of that is still really up for question. We don't know exactly when that will come, but we are in a lull right now, where we're seeing less COVID-19 activity and that's very helpful.

"We are also at a point where we are not yet seeing flu activity in our region or in the country as a whole. We're still seeing very minimal influenza transmission and we are not yet RSV season so we're in a brief moment where we're really not seeing a lot of respiratory virus transmission and that's very hopeful. It's a time where we can perhaps relax some of the measures that we put in place in the last couple of months.

It is a very good time to make sure that you're up-to-date on your fall vaccines so make sure you got the most up-to-date COVID-19 vaccine that was just released this fall. Make sure you get your flu shot and if you are eligible, make sure you get your RSV vaccine as well. RSV vaccine is recommended for everyone 75 and older and everyone 65 and older who has underlying conditions, and for newborn babies who are born going into the fall and winter so if you have a baby who's being born now starting starting in October, the RSV vaccine is recommended for them or for pregnant folks who are going to deliver during this season. So that's kind of really the big thing right now for folks is now a good time to make sure you get up-to-date so that you are safe going into the fall and winter but by and large good news on the viral front."

Director of emergency management Willie Bence talked about the shakeout which is occurring October 17 at 10:17am and you can listen here on KPTZ for that at 10:17am on the 17th of October. There will be sirens as if there was a great earthquake or some other disaster occurring. When you hear the sirens or you hear the tone on your radio, you can grab something, get low, cover your head and neck. Text yourself. Ride it out for 30 seconds. This will develop muscle memory so in the event for a real earthquake, you'll know what to do without having to think too hard about it.

Willie also talked about what happens when good natured people who want to help after disaster come in hot right on the tail of the disaster instead of preparing ahead of it to help out in the community. This is what he had to say about that. "The neighbors helping neighbors isn't something that we made up in Jefferson County. That's proven time and time again to be a huge connection and a huge lifeline during every major disaster and it's one thing during these major incident that the outpouring of support is so great we in emergency management always try to do our best to help coordinate all that extra assistance and of course folks within their neighborhoods go out and help. The one thing encourage folks – if you're the kind of person who knows you're going to be one of those helpers during a major event, please get in contact with us before the event. Let us

know what skills you bring and how you might want to help. We do have programs. We have a disaster air response team that works with private volunteer pilots to help fly goods and supplies in and out of Jefferson County, should there be a huge earthquake. We've worked with folks with boats as well who want to do the same.

So get in contact with us, let us know what skills, what resources you have, especially if you have an airplane or boat or something of that nature. Register with us so we know how to contact you, do a free background check, and we can work with you rather than trying to do so at the time. Those event-based volunteers as they scall them step forward during the event, are incredibly helpful. We're very appreciative for those folks, but it's an extra layer of coordination during the event that makes things difficult. Don't hesitate to reach out to us beforehand if you know you're going to be one of those people who can't help themselves and it's going to need the help of their community

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. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening.