

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker, with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, August 26, 2025.

In fire news, the Bear Gulch Fire north of Lake Cushman now sits at 8,702 acres but it has been 13% contained. There are 456 personnel assigned to the fire, including 4 crews, 16 engines, and 7 helicopters; the estimated cost-to-date is 32.9 million dollars. Fire behavior remains active in steep terrain, with a planned containment date of October 1. Crews are engaged in full suppression, removing hazard trees along the 24 Road corridor, and maintaining sprinklers and structure protection on the lake's northwest shore. Closures remain in effect for Forest Service Road 24 between mileposts 10.5 and 14.5 and associated spurs and trailheads. Olympic National Park's Staircase entrance, campground, and multiple North Fork Skokomish routes are all closed.

The north half of Lake Cushman is still closed to public use for helicopter dip operations. And a Temporary Flight Restriction is active, as any drone incursions will immediately ground aircraft.

Andrew Gaikowski, 35, the Jefferson County resident accused of breaking into the county courthouse and stealing an unmarked police vehicle last week, has been charged with eight felonies, including burglary, stealing a county vehicle, multiple counts of theft, and malicious mischief for damaging the courthouse. Stolen items included four body cameras and two stun gun batteries, along with charging batteries for both. Police later located the stolen vehicle in the parking lot at Rialto Beach and ordered the suspect to step outside the vehicle. The stolen items were found in the car, along with bolt cutters and a hammer, a can of butane fuel, a butane torch, and a glass pipe containing a white crystalline substance believed to be methamphetamine.

Gaikowski has seven prior convictions from 2005 to 2022, including multiple thefts, residential burglary, and malicious mischief, and this is the second time he's broken into the Courthouse this year. He remains incarcerated at the Jefferson County Jail in lieu of \$50,000 bail but pleaded not guilty at his arraignment hearing Friday in Jefferson County Superior Court, according to the *Peninsula Daily News*.

The Board of Jefferson County Commissioners has passed a cost-of-living increase for the Jefferson County Veterans Assistance Fund, the first such increase since the mid-1990s. The fund, which comes from a property tax line item, allows the advisory board to distribute grocery vouchers, rent, utilities, and medical support for Jefferson County residents with incomes of less than 200% of the poverty level. The *Peninsula Daily News* reports that food vouchers will now increase to \$240 for single veterans, \$320 for married veterans, and \$320 plus \$80 per dependent for veterans with dependents. The fund also provides a death benefit to families of veterans. That benefit has been raised from \$500 to \$800 and mostly ends up going toward funeral expenses.

The Clallam County Sheriff's Office has sent out a scam alert about fake messages from Wells Fargo Bank and Chase Bank. This past weekend two Clallam County citizens reported losing large sums after receiving fake texts claiming to be from those banks. Here's how the scam works: The scammer sends you a text saying there's a fraudulent charge on your bank card. If you reply "No" to the text, the scammer immediately calls, pretending to be the bank, and asks you to give information, move money, or accept a "digital bank card" on your phone. That card then gives them access to your phone and allows them to empty your bank account.

Please note that banks will never ask you to reply to a text or send money to verify fraud. If you do get a suspicious message, don't reply. And call your bank directly using the number on your card.

And finally, the old wooden fence around Memorial Field is slated to be replaced in the near future, and Jefferson County is inviting artists, writers, poets, musicians, photographers, and more to participate in Jefferson County's first community street art project by decorating the fence before it falls. For information, volunteering, and submissions, email osappt@gmail.com.

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at noon and 5 PM. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Diane Walker. Thank you for listening.