

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker, with your local news and commentary for Thursday, October 2, 2025.

Around 5 pm on Monday of this week, East Jefferson Fire Rescue (EJFR) responded to a report of an explosion at the Khu Larb Thai Restaurant in downtown Port Townsend. According to the Port Townsend *Leader*, though smoke came into the restaurant, there was no damage to the building, and EJFR crews were able to determine that when restaurant staff turned on their diesel furnace for the first time this season, a furnace blowback had occurred.

Furnace blowback is a furnace failure in which dirty or clogged fuel nozzles, blocked vents, or chimneys due to dirt, soot, or rust, or a cracked heat exchanger can cause fuel to ignite improperly. This creates a buildup of gas that can cause a small explosion, forcing soot and smoke into your home. To prevent blowbacks, schedule annual maintenance, check for leaks, and notice odd noises or gas smells.

The return of windy weather caused a series of headaches for Jefferson County PUD this week. By 6pm Tuesday they had 3100 customers without power, with the majority between three large outages: Port Townsend-west (~1800 customers), Gardiner (320 customers), and Quilcene (~1000 customers). Those outages have been restored but there's a new outage in Gardiner this morning, presumably also caused by trees in the lines.

The next phase of Jefferson County PUD's multiyear, \$65M broadband buildout begins this month. Contract construction crews are gearing up to build 100 miles of overhead and underground fiber optic cable between Discovery Bay and Marrowstone Island. PUD fiber will pass more than 1,000 homes in designated areas on Marrowstone Island, along Anderson Lake Road, inside the Woodland Hills community east of Rhody Drive, and along much of the eastern shore of Discovery Bay before extending inland across Cape George over to Hastings Avenue.

Construction largely follows the path of existing PUD powerlines, but on Marrowstone Island, underground trenching will take place alongside existing power poles on Flagler Road. Starting at the Kilisut Harbor Bridge to the south and extending four miles north to Nolton Road, excavation contractors will place underground conduit for both new fiber optic cable and future undergrounding of existing overhead electric wires.

During construction, partial blockages and lane closures will affect traffic on the state highway. Private drives and county roads along the eastern side of Flagler will be closed temporarily. Work will take place from 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday, from October through December. Crews will work with residents to reduce and restore any impacted areas.

Service is expected to come available sometime in 2026.

The Washington State Department of Health has announced that the federal government shutdown may have a devastating impact on Washington's WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) support program. Current estimates are that the program may only be able to sustain benefits for approximately two weeks before a federal

shutdown would force a full closure of the program. Nonetheless, WIC is asking participants to continue using their benefits, go to their scheduled appointments, and access program services as usual.

As of September 2025, Washington WIC serves nearly one-third of all babies born in the state, as well as 36% of children under the age of 5, and 29% of pregnant people. WIC helps improve the health of parents and children through healthy foods, nutrition education, breast and chest feeding support, and health screenings and referrals. The program operates 208 offices across the state and employs more than 650 people.

At this time, Jefferson County Public Health's WIC program is still open.

The 41st running of Port Townsend's Kinetic Sculpture Race is this weekend. This year's theme is "Kinetic Kinautical." The parade starts at noon Saturday at the American Legion Hall on Water Street, and the Rosehips Coronation ball starts at 8pm in the American Legion Hall. The street, sand, and mud portion of the race will start on Sunday in front of the Legion Hall at noon.

And finally, one small correction to Tuesday's news report about the speed limit change on Route 20: the limit is still 50 for that small section of road between U-Haul and the airport.

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