

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker, with your local news and commentary for Thursday, October 23, 2025, the 23rd day of the federal government shutdown.

The Washington State *Standard* reports that the federal shutdown, now the second longest shutdown in US history, has not only affected food aid for some of the country's most vulnerable residents, but has also halted information flow from the federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention, which monitors indicators such as wastewater to provide early warnings of the spread of COVID-19, influenza, RSV, and other infectious diseases. The pause leaves states with less early warning on disease outbreaks, potentially endangering lives even as child vaccination rates are dropping. Residents won't know to take precautions if they're unaware many in their community are falling ill.

One step taken by the Washington Department of Health has been to launch a Measles Exposure Location Tracker (<https://doh.wa.gov/newsroom/doh-launches-measles-exposure-map-help-keep-washingtonians-safe>), which shows public places where a person with contagious measles has been present. This new map brings together information from local health departments across Washington state into one convenient, mobile-friendly platform, making it easy to check potential exposure sites from any device. The map is designed:

- To share clear, up-to-date information people can trust
- To support local health departments by collecting exposure information in one place
- To help the public understand their risk and what to do if they might have been exposed
- To strengthen outbreak response by helping health officials prepare and communicate faster

In other health-related news, the federal tax credits that congressional Republicans are refusing to extend appear to be driving an average 21% increase in rates on the state's health benefit exchange. And that 21% is just an average. In some counties, such as King, Snohomish, Pierce, and Yakima, premiums may go up as high as 95% or more.

According to the Washington State *Standard*, roughly 300,000 Washingtonians buy health insurance through the state's online marketplace. With people forced to choose between paying hundreds of dollars more a year or downgrading their coverage, Washington officials suspect the expiration of the subsidies may lead to over 80,000 residents forgoing coverage altogether.

The Port Townsend City Council has approved a resolution declaring that damage to the Big Quilcene River diversion apron, which feeds the Olympic Gravity Water System pipeline, constitutes an emergency. This declaration allows for the immediate repair of the damage before upcoming high-flow periods of the river and waives public bidding requirements. The damage to the steel plate and armoring of the diversion apron is causing some welds to break, risking not only total failure of the apron but also potentially of the connected sluiceway and diversion structure, according to the Port Townsend *Leader*.

For those concerned about our unhoused neighbors, Jefferson County Public Health is sponsoring a tent and sleeping bag drive. They are asking for clean and usable tents (4-person or larger), sleeping bags, blankets, hats, gloves, and wool socks with no holes. You can deliver these items to the DSHS parking lot on Sundays from

1:30 to 3pm through November 3, or to the drop-in clinic at the Public Health office on Sheridan Street, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 2 to 4pm.

And finally, nighttime travelers who use US 101 between Sequim and Gardiner should plan for weeknight lane closures. On Monday through Thursday evenings tonight through November 12, WSDOT crews will conduct a variety of construction activities overnight on sections of the highway between milepost 267 and milepost 278 from 8pm to 6am. US 101 will reduce to one lane approaching the work zone, flaggers will alternate traffic one direction at a time, and there will be a reduced speed limit through the work zone.

Daytime work continues along the shoulder of the highway for sign installation and landscaping throughout the project area. People will see intermittent shoulder closures from 7am to 5pm Monday through Thursday. All work is weather-dependent and may be rescheduled.

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 and have a great weekend.