

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, July 7, 2026.

Tomorrow, July 8 at 2pm, Jefferson County's Local Emergency Planning Committee will hold a public meeting at East Jefferson Fire Rescue station #6 on Rhody Drive in Chimacum. In addition to the stated agenda items, Port Townsend resident David Ginsberg has submitted a lengthy set of questions and agenda items addressing issues with the Olympic Gravity Water System, what might be done in case of a fire, explosion, or implosion at the Port Townsend Paper Mill, and what might be done in the face of a chemical spill or a seismic event at the mill. For a zoom link to the meeting, to see the stated agenda (<https://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/24944/LEPC-7-8-2026-Agenda>) or to get a closer look at the questions Mr. Ginsberg is raising, visit https://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/24993/V_13_Letter_LEPC_BradBrooks_AgendaItemsRequest_Jun29_2026,

In related news, the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) has opened two new inspections into kraft pulp and paper mills in the state. The new action is in addition to the agency's ongoing investigations at Nippon Dynawave following the tank failure in Longview. Kraft pulp and paper mills use caustic chemical compounds, including one known as white liquor, to break down wood into pulp for paper product manufacturing. In addition to Nippon, there are two other active Kraft pulp and paper mills in the state: a second mill in Longview and the Port Townsend Paper Company.

Under the Washington Industrial Safety & Health Act, employers are required to assess hazards on their work site, including those involving storage tanks and handling hazardous chemicals. They must then take effective steps to control those hazards.

All three L&I inspections will focus on whether these mills have been following these requirements. Investigators will review, among other things:

- Tank maintenance, inspection, testing, and open repair items;
- Relevant Environmental Protection Agency or Washington Department of Ecology reports including records of any spills or breaches that impact workers;
- Written procedures for the operation and maintenance of the tanks to ensure worker safety; and,
- Injuries or near misses for employees and contractors working around the tanks.

As part of the investigation, they will be gathering relevant documentation, including safety plans and hazard assessments. They'll also interview witnesses and conduct a thorough physical inspection of the site. The inspectors then make determinations about whether there were violations of safety rules, and whether those violations will result in penalties.

L&I has 180 days, by law, to complete an investigation. Once the investigation has been completed, a closing conference will be held with employer and worker representatives, in which L&I shares findings with the employer and representatives to make clear what the employer needs to do to correct any issues, and on what timeline. Once the employer receives the final findings of the inspection, they have 15 working days to appeal any violations.

In addition to inspections at the three kraft pulp and paper mills, L&I is also starting a targeted enforcement program to conduct similar inspections into chemical use and storage at seven additional pulp and paper mills in

Washington that do not use the kraft process. The enforcement program will run through February 2027 to give inspectors enough time to complete their evaluations.

There will be a Twana Bridge Community Meeting for a project update on the bridge project Monday, July 13, from 6-7:30pm at the Quilcene Community Center on US Highway 101 in Quilcene. This meeting is open to the public and will provide an opportunity for comments and feedback regarding the Bridge project and surrounding habitat restoration efforts. The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe and the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group will provide updates on the project timeline and goals, parking, sanitation facilities, dumpster service, and law enforcement presence during fishing season.

And finally, the City of Port Townsend has announced that artist Jesse Joshua Watson has been awarded the commission to create a new public art mural at the Seamus Sims Skate Park. Watson's work was chosen from 17 applications by Jefferson County-based artists. The concept for the mural includes an underwater seascape with elements from Port Townsend's architecture and landmarks, which will be further developed through a collaborative process involving skate park users and the wider community.

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.