

KITTITAS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH
DAILY VIDEO UPDATE
Tuesday, August 18, 2020

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Good afternoon. It's Dr. Larson talking about COVID-19 in Kittitas County.

We had another death early this morning, a person in long-term care. That brings the total to 21 Kittitas County residents who have died, secondary to COVID-19. That's the bad news.

The good news is that we have gone for two weeks now, at both Prestige and Pacifica, without any new cases among residents and staff. They are now working on their plans when it comes to reopening.

We are standing down our alternative care facility at Pacifica which was established to help with their memory care unit (they got a little bit of a higher level of care than is normally present in an assisted living facility). Pacifica will take that over tomorrow morning.

Mostly what we at Public Health are working on is helping to get the school districts started again. Most schools have decided to start with online only school, based on our incident rate. Kasey looked it up today and our rate is currently 105.2 cases per 100,000 for 14 days. To safely start school, that number needs to be lower than 75.

Schools *can* petition for reopening despite the numbers being high and two school districts are doing that: Kittitas School District and Ellensburg Christian School.

We're working with Mike Nollan and Heather Burfeind at KSD, and with Tammie Lenz at ECS. They are all trying to figure how to make opening work. There are things these schools have to be cognizant of, such as maintaining six foot social distancing. This requirement can be a big problem and is why some schools have decided not to reopen right away. Masking is also required, by law. That document is easy to fine and there's good science behind masking.

The combination of masking and social distancing allows us to perhaps safely be able to start school, not have to quarantine a whole classroom, or even close down an entire school. We need

social distancing, masking, working in small pods, having lunch in the classroom, etc.

These things are necessary to open the schools -- whether by petition by a small school, or when the schools reopen in the fall. Some schools are going quarter by quarter, and some (like Easton) are going to reevaluate after four to six weeks.

Hopefully, we as a community can continue to avoid large gatherings, keeping our numbers down. We want to avoid the type of thing where people are getting together and spreading disease. Then we can move forward, keep businesses open, and get schools open again so parents can get back to work.

This requires community effort, and I think we're up for it. Thanks a lot and we'll talk to you later this week.

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Today's video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NjBBVrLjsE>

KCPHD channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyQzBwJLbkLj7WueKJ5w7mQ/>