

KITTITAS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH
DAILY VIDEO UPDATE
Tuesday, August 25, 2020

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Good afternoon. It's Mark Larson and it's Tuesday. Sorry I missed the Friday video, I took a day off and went off grid. That was really good for me.

We in Kittitas County are doing really well from a COVID-19 standpoint. Think about a hurricane. We went through the front side of the hurricane with our disease at Prestige and Pacifica. Those things are calming down now. Prestige is admitting patients again and we'll be testing Pacifica again. Neither of those places has had a positive case for three weeks.

We're kind of in the middle of the hurricane now, where things are calm and quiet.

The next wall of the hurricane will involve CWU opening on September 8 (the students start coming back on September 5). CWU plans on having 2100 students in the dorms, in single occupancy rooms. They expect to have normal enrollment overall, but only 10% of the classes will be in person.

We do know the numbers will go back up again, but CWU is ready. They have isolation and quarantine plans and Public Health will do the case and contact investigation. We expect that to go well. CWU will also be testing their athletes who will be coming back in the next week (even though they're not doing sports until January).

There are three sets of numbers to look at in regard to K-12 education, according to the Governor's website as well as OSPI and Region 7 guidance.

One is the incidence rate, or the number of cases per 100,000 people for 14 days. If you know the number of cases that occurred in the last 14 days, say 25, in Kittitas County we'd multiply that by 2 because 50,000 people live here. So in this example, the incidence rate is 50.

Currently, the incidence rate is going down in our county. To open school, we need to be below 75 cases. More than 75 cases is a red light, between 25 and 75 cases is a yellow light, and fewer than 25 cases is a green light. There's a map at the DOH website

showing the incident rates in the different counties.

All the schools in the county, except for Kittitas School District and the Ellensburg Christian School, are starting the year online. The schools are responsible for their decisions, including when they'll switch to doing something in the yellow light area (either a hybrid because they can't fit all their students in with six foot social distancing or allowing some students to come back who have special needs).

Kittitas School District and Ellensburg Christian School think they can start in person safely, so they're putting their plan together so they can petition the Health Department. We will look at their plans and try to make it safer. It's still up to them to make that decision, and it's their responsibility. We at Public Health can say we don't think it's safe if the incidence rate is above 75, but that's a recommendation and not a mandate. We are trying to help the schools make safer decisions.

You will probably see a lot in regard to these two schools. Hopefully things will go well.

According to the governor, masking is required in the schools. That's actually a law, so the schools will have to follow masking law as well as the guidelines on 6 foot social distancing.

I spoke with the principal of Ellensburg Christian School and the superintendent of Kittitas and they're working hard to get ready for their students.

Some schools are bringing back students with special needs, as well as perhaps kindergartners, because they feel those students need to be back in school. We all feel like students will do better in school when it's safe for that.

Don't confuse incidence rates with the number you might see on the Public Health Department website, which is the number of active cases. Active cases is the number of cases we're currently following, which is different from the incidence rate. The ones we're following are people who are in isolation or are still sick.

We're doing better! Continue to wear your masks, be kind, watch out for others. We'll talk to you on Friday. Thanks a lot. Good bye.

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