

From: [Mayor](#)
To: [Mayor](#)
Subject: COVID-19 Update: Improving Mental Wellness
Date: Wednesday, December 16, 2020 8:38:54 AM



A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Valerie Woodward".

The City of Spokane COVID-19 News Update for Dec. 16

Information about Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19) is evolving rapidly. We want to make sure our City employees have up-to-date information. We will provide this update, as needed, to communicate what you need to know, while we work to reduce the spread of this disease in our community and continue to provide critical public services.

A Message from Mayor Woodward

As the holidays fast approach, many are looking for ways to experience joy and celebrate the season. At the City, we hope things like the opening of the Numerica Skate Ribbon and light displays at Riverfront and Manito Park might help a bit.

And it is important to also acknowledge this is a stressful time for many in our community. With everything we've been through this year, it's normal to feel anxious, sad, scared, or angry, or to experience grief over changes and missed events. If you are experiencing any of these feelings you are not alone.

I can honestly share that this year wasn't what I anticipated in my first year as your Mayor. I have experienced disappointment and stress right along with you.

The state Department of Health tells us that somewhere close to half of Washington's residents will face some sort of significant mental wellness challenge in the next few months. Depression, anxiety, and acute stress will be common.

Here's the thing: Those experts describe this as a **normal** reaction to **abnormal** circumstances. The most important thing to remember is that it's okay and important to ask for help if you are struggling.

Washington state has a free service to do just that called "Washington Listens." Anyone in the state can call the toll-free number—1-833-681-0211—to receive support. The Washington Listens service provides callers with support to manage elevated stress and cope with the changes due to COVID-19. They can also be connected to community resources in their area. The program is anonymous.

Other hotlines and services are also available to help. If you are in crisis, the Frontier Behavioral Health Regional Crisis Line is available at 1.877.266.1818. Residents also can call 2-1-1 to get connected to community resources and local support groups.

These conversations can be tough, and talking with the right person is important. Connect with someone who is trained to help, who is willing to listen and help you identify healthy ways to manage stress and reduce negative health effects. There is no one right way to get through this. And together we will.

If you are struggling, add these resources to your self-care box next to getting regular exercise, meditating or making a spiritual connection, and staying connected with your friends and family in a safe way. Take care.

Employee Situational Awareness related to Recent Events

Last week, a man started a fire and threatened other violent action in the Teamsters building on North Division, which also houses the local Democratic Party office. The suspect indicated overall frustration with government, and we have heard of similar concerns and actions in other places. While we have no information to indicate we should anticipate any additional activity like this, we want to remind our employees to be on alert to the potential for threats and violence.

As you go about your week, practice good situational awareness – be alert – look around as you enter and leave your work area – refamiliarize yourself with your emergency exits – don't be afraid to buddy up with a co-worker or ask for an escort out when leaving your facility for the evening. It is easy to fall into habits and routines, causing us to overlook things that might otherwise raise a caution flag and keep us out of harm's way. Keep that in mind, and please report any activity that appears suspicious. If you have questions, concerns, or otherwise – please reach out to your supervisor.

Vaccines are Arriving!

The Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has been approved by the FDA, and Gov. Jay Inslee, joined by Washington Department of Health (DOH) officials, announced that the Western States' Scientific Safety Review Workgroup also unanimously approved use of the vaccine. Washington has now received its first allotment, with administration beginning as early as Tuesday, Dec. 15. Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) confirmed that at least 3,900 will be sent to health care providers in Spokane County.

DOH officials say there will be 62,400 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for Washington State's initial allocation, and Washington should receive an estimated total of around 200,000 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine by the end of December. Regular weekly shipments should begin in January. There will be continual shipments of vaccine, so the first doses will be solely for first dose administration. More information on the vaccine and its distribution in Washington is found on [the DOH web site](#).

From the Toys for Tots Auction Team

It is with a sad heart that the Toys for Tots Auction Team has determined that they will need to postpone the Toys for Tots Auction this year. It was determined to be financially unfeasible for our team to pull off a virtual auction this year, so we are going to postpone the auction until some time in 2021. We hope to be back bigger and better than before, so if you have baskets, handmade items, etc., please save them for the 2021 auction. Thank you for your support over all the years! And if you still want to help Toys for Tots, [here is a link to a page with information](#) on how to make an online donation or send a check in support.

Watch Out for Utility Bill Scams!

The City of Spokane utility customers should be aware of potential scam calls that threaten water shutoff because of a late bill. Citizens have reported that they received robocalls stating they were behind on their City utility payments and to press "one" to talk to an operator. The City does not contact customers about bills through automated calls and currently, water shutoffs and late fees are suspended because of the pandemic. [More information is on the City's web site](#).

Follow the Light!

Follow the light—ok, lights—and enjoy the season!

- The **Enchanted Garden Drive-Thru Holiday Lights at Manito** transforms a decades-long Spokane tradition into a COVID-friendly experience to lift spirits and brighten the season. The show is available through Sunday, Dec. 20--4:30 to 9:30 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays and 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Sunday through Thursday. See more information on the [Friends of Manito web site](#).
- The **Night Holiday Tree Walk** continues at Riverfront Park daily in December, as does the Riverfront Winter Farmers Market locate in the Pavilion Central Plaza on Wednesdays from 3 to 7 p.m. through January. [Find more information here](#).
- **Ice skating** is available at Riverfront Park's [Numerica Skate Ribbon](#) under revised COVID-19 protocols. With safety at the forefront, skaters will be required to reserve a date/time and purchase tickets online to ensure we limit the number of skaters and provide a great experience.

More Information to Assist Our Employees

Here are some more resources from our Employee Assistance Program:

- [Managing Stress: Tips for Survivors of a Traumatic Event](#)

You may feel emotionally:

- Anxious or fearful
- Overwhelmed by sadness
- Angry, mostly if the event involved violence
- Guilty, even when you had no control over the traumatic event
- Heroic, like you, can do anything
- Like you have too much energy or no energy at all
- Disconnected, not caring about anything or anyone
- Numb, unable to feel either joy or sadness

To access more topics related to COVID-19 visit: [EAPHelpLink.com](#), using company code: **CITSP0**

Employee Information Portal (covid19.spokanecity.org/)

Remember, this Employee Information Portal is a great resource for employees to stay current on what's happening with the COVID-19 response. The [Employee Information Portal](#) can be accessed from work or home, using a computer or mobile device. All of the emailed information we have sent to employees is archived here.