

From: [Mayor](#)
To: [Mayor](#)
Subject: COVID-19 Update: Togetherness
Date: Tuesday, January 12, 2021 7:14:27 PM



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

The City of Spokane

COVID-19 News Update for Jan. 12

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

The pointed, passionate conversations we are having as a nation and community are continuing. Election news, the transition of presidential power, COVID, and vaccines are among the topics that dominate headlines and social media feeds. The central question in each exchange is about the direction we see ourselves moving as individuals, as social circles, as a community, as a country.

Intellectually, the debate itself is healthy and produces critical thinking that can be formative for years to come. The challenge is finding the space to work together to have the conversation without talking past each other, or worse, creating an environment that breeds fear and contempt.

The likelihood that we will find ourselves in the middle of these exchanges in the coming days and weeks, whether we choose to engage or the conversation finds us, is very high.

Responding quickly, emotionally without taking the time to listen and process the messages others are delivering, especially when we may disagree, is tempting. If we are to move forward, we have to create space for different voices, other perspectives, and meaningful conversation.

Now, more than at any time in recent memory, it is a time to listen, really listen, to what others are saying.

Speaking up takes a lot of courage. Sometimes, listening quietly takes even more.

Our country is at a crossroads. The instinct is to push strongly for your position and push back even harder against those who may disagree, to talk over and past one another as if volume makes the point somehow more valid.

One of the things that sets Spokane apart is our willingness to take a different path. We have chosen to work together, to engage in dialogue, to find compromise, even if it is sometimes a little bumpy. We have the chance to set an example again.

COVID in the Workplace

If nothing else, COVID is teaching us all to be more flexible. Our Human Resources team has updated their [COVID in the Workplace FAQ sheet](#) to provide us all with current information. Additionally, they have set up the [HR COVID Response Team](#); the team will answer questions submitted by email within 24 hours, seven days a week. Here's that email: erahrcovidr@spokanecity.org.

Getting a COVID test covered by insurance

For a COVID-19 Test to be covered by Kaiser Permanente or Premera Blue Cross, the following must occur:

- The test must be ordered by a provider.
- The test must be medically necessary (due to exposure or you are experiencing specific symptoms).
- The test must be provided at an in-network site/location.

If the above criteria is met, you and/or your qualified and enrolled eligible dependents will have deductibles, coinsurance and copayments waived for COVID-19 related evaluation, tests and treatment through March 31, 2021.

If you receive an Explanation of Benefits (EOB) from Kaiser Permanente or Premera Blue Cross or a bill from a provider relating to COVID-19 testing and you do not understand why you are being billed, there could be myriad of reasons. Those reasons could include that a provider did not order the test, the test location does not bill insurance, the test was not medically necessary (no symptoms and/or no exposure), or the claim was not coded properly, etc.

Please contact the Customer Service Department at Kaiser Permanente @ 1-888-901-4636 or Premera Blue Cross @ 1-800-722-1471 to seek clarification.

Vaccine information

The City is part of the Spokane Regional Health District's vaccine task force to help roll out vaccines in our community, following guidelines provided by the [state Department of Health](#) and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. DOH released an [estimated vaccine phases timeline](#) on Wednesday.

Vaccines became available for the first City employees—our first responders—last week, as the task force opened a drive-through vaccination clinic for first responders who are providing patient care including firefighters and police.

We don't have specific information yet on when vaccines may be available for other essential workers. And as of now, vaccines are not currently available to the general public. Sarah Nuss, our Director of Emergency Management, is tracking vaccine information, and we will continue to provide updates.

The choice about whether to receive a vaccine is up to the individual employee. Eventually, though, we are hopeful that we will be able to offer vaccines in the workplace, similar to the flu shot clinics we hold annually. We anticipate employees would be able to access the vaccines during work time.

Please know that it will take months for wide distribution of vaccines. Use of masks, maintaining six feet of physical distancing, and hand washing will continue to be our standard for limiting infection for some time.

City Gyms to Reopen with Restrictions

Based on revised COVID guidance as part of the ["Healthy Washington"](#) reopening plan that allows some activity in indoor gyms, the City will reopen the gyms in its facilities under the following requirements:

- One person can use the gym at a time.
- A sign-up sheet to use the gym is required.
- Workouts are limited to 45 minutes.
- Those who use equipment are required to sanitize that equipment.

The City closed its gym facilities in November to be in compliance with revised guidance at time.

The Lights Continue!

If you haven't gotten a chance to get down to Riverfront Park, your opportunities have been extended:

- The **Night Holiday Tree Walk** and the nightly **light show at the Pavilion** will continue at Riverfront Park through January. The Riverfront Winter Farmers Market located in the Pavilion Central Plaza on Wednesdays from 3 to 7 p.m. also runs 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:

- [Major Depression and Family](#)
While most people have experienced a period of feeling down or blue, those who experience significant depression experience a far more profound sense of feeling overwhelmed by dread and despair. Their feelings may be independent of, somewhat dependent upon, and at times fully connected to life experiences. Often the intensity of the emotions will appear disproportionate to outside observers. Find out more.

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

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.