

**From:** [Mayor](#)  
**To:** [Mayor](#)  
**Subject:** COVID-19 Update: A Healthy New Year  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 5, 2021 5:22:21 PM

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

## The City of Spokane

# COVID-19 News Update for Jan. 5

*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**

Happy New Year! Like many of you, I was happy to see 2020 go, and I look forward to a more hopeful 2021. I have dubbed the new year as our “Covid Comeback,” and I know that our employees are ready to continue to lift up our community and each other.

We have to remember, though, that the changes won’t be immediate. The current restrictions in Washington state have been extended until Jan. 11, and we are just starting to understand how that will change over time. We also should anticipate continuing high cases of COVID-19 in our state and our nation in the coming weeks.

Now is not the time to let down our guard. Use of masks, maintaining six feet of physical distancing and hand washing will remain our main defenses against the spread of the coronavirus for some time.

We also should take the time to take care of ourselves. Get some exercise, meditate or make a spiritual connection, and stay connected with your friends and family in a safe way. We have continued the lights and the Winter Market at Riverfront Park. The Numerica Skate Ribbon is another great way to get out and get some fresh air and exercise.

And be sure to reach out to others if you are struggling. 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.

Take advantage of the “Washington Listens” free service. 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. Our employees can also connect with resources through our EAP program. Access [EAPHelpLink.com](https://www.eaphelp.com), using company code **CITSPO** or call 1-800-999-1077.

I am looking forward to the year ahead, working with all of you!

### **Governor Announces New Reopening Plan**

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee today announced a new “[Healthy Washington](#)” reopening plan that will begin on Jan. 11 when current restrictions expire. The state has been divided into eight regions, and regions will have to achieve certain metrics to move toward greater reopening. Each region will start at Phase 1—which essentially includes the same restrictions as today with a few minor changes—and automatically progress to the next phase based on the metrics. Indoor dining remains prohibited in Phase 1.

The new metrics include a 10% decreasing trend in case rates; a 10% decrease in COVID-19 hospital administration rates; an ICU occupancy rate that’s less than 90%; and a test positivity rate of less than 10%. We will be watching for additional clarifying information on the new plan.

Mayor Nadine Woodward issued the following statement about the Healthy Washington Plan:

“This new plan gives people renewed hope and a goal certain to pursue every day. Our community, along with the rest of the state, has been paused in place for quite some time. New information and a clear path forward are welcomed and appreciated and help ease the frustration and fatigue that has begun setting in. A regional approach and accountability are some of the many positives that are a part of this new plan and we look forward to greater definition of additional steps. Today is a next step and not the end, both in terms of the state’s plan and of the responsibilities we all share as individuals to maintain our resilience and discipline to wear our masks, watch our distance, wash our hands, and limit gatherings.”

### **COVID Resources from our Medical Plans**

Kaiser Permanente and Premera Blue Cross both have a variety of COVID medical resources available. These web pages provide the most current information relating to the progress of the vaccine and how that will impact their membership, which includes our employees and their dependents.

Here’s how to access the information:

- Kaiser COVID Information can be [accessed online](#) or by calling the following dedicated COVID-19 recorded phone line 24 hours a day at 1.855.550.0951. If employees or their covered dependents have additional COVID-19 related questions that cannot be answered through the web site, Kaiser’s Customer Service phone number is 1.888.901.4636. Kaiser also has added two self-care apps to help members build resilience, set goals and maintain health and emotional well-being. Get [more information](#).
- Premera Blue Cross COVID information can be [accessed online](#). If employees or their covered dependents have additional COVID-19 related questions that can’t be answered through the web site, Premera’s customer service number is 1.800.722.1471.

### **The Lights Will Continue!**

If you haven’t gotten a chance to get down to Riverfront, 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.

### **Holiday Tree Disposal**

The City’s Solid Waste Collection Department will offer **free curbside pickup of fresh Christmas trees for**

**its customers through Friday, Jan. 8.** Once the decorations are removed, residents can place their fresh-cut trees (trunks no bigger than three inches in diameter) at least three feet away from the refuse and recycling carts on their regularly scheduled garbage pickup days. No artificial or flocked trees are accepted through this service.

The City will accept trees up to six feet in height; if they're taller than that, cut them in half. Loose branches may be bundled next to the tree not to exceed six feet in length. Trees collected curbside will be chipped and composted. For information, call the City at 3-1-1 (or 509.755.2489 if calling outside the City).

City and County residents also can take their undecorated, unflocked trees for disposal (subject to minimum clean green fees) to:

- *Waste-to-Energy Facility*, 2900 S. Geiger Blvd. Open 7: 30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.
- *Spokane Valley Transfer Station*, 3941 N. Sullivan Road. Open 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.
- *North County Transfer Station*, 22123 Elk-Chattaroy Road. Open 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.

### **More Information to Assist Our Employees**

*Here are some more resources from our Employee Assistance Program:*

- [Being assertive: Reduce stress, communicate better](#)  
Being assertive is a core communication skill. Assertiveness can help you express yourself effectively and stand up for your point of view while also respecting others' rights and beliefs. Being assertive can also help boost your self-esteem and earn others' respect. This can help with stress management, especially if you tend to take on too many responsibilities because you have difficulty saying no.

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

### **Employee Information Portal ([covid19.spokanecity.org/](https://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.