

The City of Spokane

Weekly News Update for May 11

Information about Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19) is evolving rapidly, and our important work as a City is continuing. We want to make sure our City employees have up-to-date information on both COVID and employee news. 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

Spokane will receive some much-needed financial relief for the community this week. The first of two equal installments of \$40.4 million each for local household, small business, impacted industries, and essential worker needs will come to the City. A second payment is expected next May.

The money is welcome support for our community and economy, which has been damaged by the global pandemic. Our large hospitality and medical workforce, in particular, has suffered through the ups and downs of battling COVID.

Earlier this year, I brought together a group of local elected officials to send a letter to our federal congressional delegation requesting the passage of legislation that provided cities with direct, flexible financial resources for our region. This money will help speed our community's recovery by supporting local business, jobs, housing, and other needs.

Financial relief is coming from the U.S. Treasury Coronavirus State and Local Recovery Fund and will be directed to meet community needs following a public process. Community needs will be prioritized as funds are allocated over the next several months.

The federal funding can also be used to expand City programs and services that were compressed in response to the pandemic budget impact and to invest in critical infrastructure needs. City revenue remained flat from 2019 to 2020 while expenses increased 2.9 percent.

Other local cities, the county, school districts, and services providers are among local entities that are receiving additional direct allocations from the federal government. Those entities will go through their own allocation and disbursement processes.

We are continuing to advocate on behalf of Spokane at the state and federal levels for the needs of our community. That work takes time and persistence and is well-worth doing on your behalf. Thank you for all that you are also doing for your community. We will get through this together.

Two-Week Pause on Phases

Tuesday, May 4, Governor Jay Inslee announced a two-week pause on movement in the [Healthy Washington: Roadmap to Recovery](#) reopening plan. Under the pause, Spokane County will remain in Phase 3. On Tuesday, May 18, each county will be re-evaluated.

Vaccines: Paid time for appointments

The City would like to ensure that employees have flexibility in obtaining the vaccine.

Similar to the flu vaccine, employees will be allowed to get the COVID-19 vaccine during their shift or normal working hours, without use of their leave accruals.

- Use of paid time must be pre-authorized by the employee's supervisor and arranged for a mutually agreeable time that creates the least impact to the workplace.
- Proof of appointment is required. Proof of appointment can be obtained through the online scheduling system. Employees can either print, email or show proof of appointment to their supervisor on their smart phone.
- Employees are only authorized paid time to obtain the vaccine. If they show signs or symptoms following the vaccine administration, they must use their personal leave accruals for additional time off.
- Paid time is only authorized for employees who are able to get their vaccine during their normal shift. Employees will not be eligible for overtime if they obtain the vaccine on personal time.

To find a vaccine near you visit vaccinelocator.doh.wa.gov.

2021 Health Care Flexible Spending Account (FSA) Participants

The IRS has recently announced the purchase of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks, hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes, for the primary purpose of preventing the spread of COVID-19, are deductible medical expenses.

Said expenses can be submitted for reimbursement from your 2021 FSA contributions with a purchase date of January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021.

If you have any questions, please contact REHN & Associates at 509-534-0600.

Extended Benefit – COVID-19 Testing and Treatment Cost Shares

Please be aware the City is assisting where we are able. We have extended paying all COVID related cost shares for City of Spokane enrolled employees and dependents in Kaiser Permanente or Premera Blue Cross Medical Plans through July 20, 2021. This includes cost shares that you would normally pay as part of your deductible, coinsurance and/or copayment for you and/or your dependents. We are in this together!

COVID-19 in the Workplace

Sometimes, despite a person's best efforts to protect themselves from an exposure, an employee may fall ill to COVID-19. Employees have had many questions on how we manage COVID-19 in the workplace. Here are the updated [FAQs for our employees](#).

More Information to Assist Our Employees

Here are some more resources from our Employee Assistance Program:

- [Pillars of Resilience](#)
Resilience is the ability to function well in the face of adversity. The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) resilience model has four pillars: mental, physical, social, and spiritual. Balancing these four components helps strengthen your life.
- [Pain Rehabilitation](#)
In most pain rehabilitation programs, a pain professional, pain psychologist and other specialists work together as an interdisciplinary team. They incorporate cognitive behavioral therapy techniques to help identify and replace negative thoughts and unhealthy behaviors. This can help you get back to your regular activities and improve your quality of life.

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.