

The City of Spokane

# Weekly News Update for Jan. 11

*Information about 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.*

## **Face Coverings/Masks**

COVID-19 has once again proven to be a difficult adversary, and cases are increasing across City employees. **Mandatory masking** is in place at the City, in order to protect City employees, their families, and members of the public who may visit City facilities.

**As a reminder, while indoors, masking is required for all City employees, customers, and visitors in all City facilities when not sitting alone at your desk.**

Along with [wearing masks](#), we are reminding everyone to:

- Maintain 6 feet of social distancing when possible
- Avoid large gatherings in conference rooms or other communal work spaces
- Refrain from shared food, such as pizza, cakes, donuts, muffins, and other items that are not individually packaged
- Get tested if you believe you have been exposed to COVID-19, and observe [proper quarantine and isolation guidelines](#)

We also encourage everyone to take advantage of vaccines and booster doses (i.e., the third dose) in our community. Vaccination remains the best way to protect yourselves and others from the virus and from severe symptoms.

Our thank you for your dedication to serving the community, even as we have faced uncertain times. We will keep track of continued local, state, and federal guidance and changes in disease prevalence and transmission in the coming weeks, and we will continue to adapt.

## **Telecommuting**

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a confusing time for all. Conditions have changed in a moment's notice, and with information and data continuously evolving we often find that each day brings new challenges to our workforce and working conditions-- not to mention to our home and family lives.

At the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 the City's office-based workforce largely moved to a full-time teleworking environment. The employees engaged in providing essential services (i.e., administration,

public works, public safety) remained working in-person and continued in-person throughout the entirety of the pandemic. As it seemed things were beginning to normalize in 2021, and effective vaccines were made available to the entire adult population, City leadership and the public desired that in-person City services resume operations. In response, the City reopened the public service counters on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors of City Hall, and in-person services offered at Fire Station 1. While it was the intent earlier this summer to begin transitioning the majority of City employees teleworking back into City facilities, the community experienced another surge in COVID-19 cases which prompted the City to hold back on a larger reopening effort.

Throughout the pandemic, City Department heads have been responsible for establishing work plans specific to their departments. City leadership has purposefully not communicated a Citywide plan for teleworking because there is simply not a one-size fits all approach that will work for all Departments across the City. While some Departments may be able to telework entirely, others require some form of in-person interaction, and some departments have returned to and remained in-person since the summer of 2020.

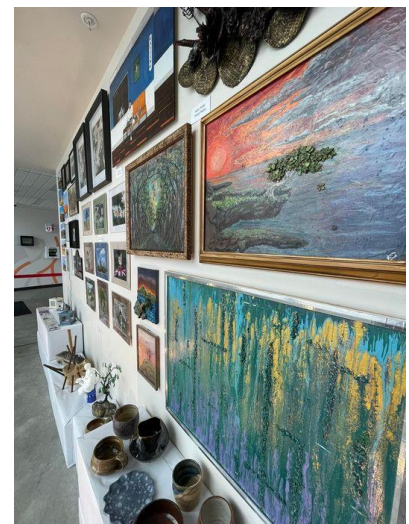
Employees who are feeling uncertain or stressed regarding their working conditions should communicate those concerns to their supervisor. If they are uncomfortable discussing concerns with their supervisor, or do not feel their supervisor is adequately addressing their concerns, employees should follow their chain of command/supervision, and can always independently contact Human Resources.

One thing we have learned about the pandemic is that information, the impacts, and the resulting adjustments remain fluid. As an example, we received new information about the federal vaccine mandate (which remains under Supreme Court review) about a week ago and expect to receive a companion set of guidance from the state. That information is being evaluated and will once again instruct our thinking about operations and timelines for implementation moving forward.

We understand the frustration that comes with living in a changing environment over an extended period of time and appreciate your continued feedback, understanding, and patience as we navigate this new territory together. Know that we are mindful of meeting immediate needs and considering long-term operational adjustments as we prioritize the health, safety, and ability of our current team members to best serve the community and plan for attracting future candidates to join the City team.

### **Pavilion Art Space**

Check out the new [Pavilion Art Space](#) display featuring artwork created by City of Spokane employees! This gallery is located on the east side of the Pavilion admin building and is viewable during regular park hours: 6 a.m. to midnight.



## **More Information to Assist You**

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

- [How to Help Yourself or Others Who Are Depressed](#)

If you are depressed, the most important thing is to go see a mental health professional to seek appropriate treatment. This may be in the form of medication, therapy or both. The first step may be visiting your family doctor or calling the employee assistance program (EAP). For information on how to help yourself or a loved one who is depressed [click here](#).

- [Teen Depression](#)

Teen depression is a serious medical illness. It's more than just a feeling of being sad or "blue" for a few days. It is an intense feeling of sadness, hopelessness, and anger or frustration that lasts much longer. For tips on how to help your teen [click here](#).

## **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.