

The City of Spokane

Weekly News Update for Jan. 18

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.

Supreme Court Vaccine Mandate Ruling

Many of you are following closely the court proceedings related to the federal vaccine mandate and are aware that late last week the Supreme Court stayed a portion of its enforcement. That portion relates to the mandate directed at major employers, which we believe would have applied to the City as a result of the Washington Industrial Safety Act, which includes public employers.

Here's what we know at this point and what it means to you:

- The original federal district court decision remains open for review and its universal applicability is still an open question. The temporary stay by the Supreme Court will remain in effect until review options are granted or resolved.
- The Supreme Court decision does not necessarily preclude the state from moving forward with a statewide mandate. The state several weeks ago announced its intention to enforce the federal mandate through its regulatory agency and has not given the City any indication at this point that it intends to proceed separate from the federal mandate.
- There is still the real possibility that at some point a mandate could go into effect, it is just not enforced at this point.
- The action taken late last week by the Supreme Court does not apply to the health care workers mandate and it remains in effect.
- Vaccine remains the best way to prevent COVID or significantly reduce its impacts.
- Fully vaccinated now means those who are eligible have received the booster dose.

City legal, human resources, and emergency management are continuing to monitor the federal court proceedings and state guidance. The team will also continue to take steps to be prepared if the mandate were to go into effect. That will include working with the bargaining units on accommodations to keep people in their jobs.

Adjusting and adapting to the pandemic and the changing guidance continues to be a long and dynamic process. Thank you for your patience as we do our best to stay current and keep you updated with the most current information. Please let your supervisor know if you have questions.

Free At-Home COVID-19 Tests

Residential households in the U.S. can order one set of four free at-home tests from [USPS.com](https://www.usps.com). Here's what you need to know about your order:

- Limit of one order per residential address
- One order includes four individual rapid antigen COVID-19 tests
- Orders will ship free starting in late January

[Click here](#) to order.

WA Cares Act Update

Mandatory Payroll Tax – **UPDATE** – **The Legislature is considering delaying the implementation of this tax. It is unclear at this time if we will be making payroll deductions during 2022. We will keep you apprised.**

Washington State Cares Fund (Long-Term Care Tax)

A House Committee approved a Bill on January 13, 2022 to delay the long-term care tax until 2023. A second Bill was approved to create voluntary exemptions for the tax for veterans, spouses of military members, nonimmigrant temporary workers and employees who work outside of the State. **Both Bills need to pass the full House and the Senate before becoming law.**

More Information to Assist You

Here are some more resources from our Employee Assistance Program:

- [Legal and Financial Planning for People with Dementia](#)
Many people are unprepared to deal with the legal and financial consequences of a serious illness such as Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. Legal and medical experts encourage people recently diagnosed with a serious illness to examine and update their financial and health care arrangements as soon as possible. Basic legal and financial documents, such as a will, a living trust, and advance directives, are available to ensure that the person's late-stage or end-of-life health care and financial decisions are carried out.

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.