

The City of Spokane

Weekly News Update for Jan. 4

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.

Vaccine/Testing Rules

As many of you have heard, the Mandatory Testing or Vaccination Rules implemented by OSHA have been subject to various legal challenges.

Recently, the Sixth Circuit allowed the Rules to go into effect. This decision has been appealed to the Supreme Court, which will hear arguments on the appeal on January 7, 2022.

For states like Washington, the State has 30 days to implement its own rules under the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act that are at least as effective as the federal rules. Assuming the Washington rules are at least as effective, the state rules will govern employers like the City of Spokane.

We anticipate the state rules will be very similar to the federal rules and are in the process of preparing a policy to comply with these legal requirements.

Following a final ruling and policy implementation, Human Resources will begin the vaccine verification process through the City's SharePoint site, and accepting requests for medical or religious exemptions.

Specific forms to request an exemption will be provided at that time. Employees do NOT need to be fully vaccinated by Monday, Jan. 10 as has been previously reported to the public. The final state rules will inform the actual deadlines. We will update you as we closely monitor the situation.

Second Harvest Food Drive

Hunger and food shortage is one of the great challenges affecting our community and in an effort to do what we can to meet that need,



collection boxes are present near the elevators on each floor of City Hall, as well as at several of the City's satellite facilities through the end of December. For more info on which items are most in need, and to learn about where your donations end up, visit the Second Harvest [website](#).

Mandatory Payroll Tax Delayed

As you know, taxation of employees in Washington State for the new WA Cares Fund (Long-Term Care Tax) was to begin January 2022 for those employees who had not purchased a private policy by the deadline.

Governor Inslee, along with other key individuals in the legislature, has requested a delay and modification(s) to the Bill. The City of Spokane will pause employee collections that were to begin in January 2022. **Again, we will not be withholding the WA Cares Fund Payroll Tax beginning in January as previously communicated.** We believe there will be a tax to be withheld in the future and will communicate that information to you as soon as it becomes available.

More Information to Assist You

Here are some more resources from our Employee Assistance Program:

- [The Power of Positive Reframing](#)
When faced with an unexpected change, many people immediately characterize it as “bad” and have a negative reaction—often driven by fear of what might come next. By shifting the frame through which you view something—what some people call positive reframing—you can often turn that negative reaction around. When you do, you’ll find opportunities for personal growth, closer collaboration, and better outcomes.
- [Five Action Steps for Helping Someone in Emotional Pain](#)
Suicide affects people of all ages, genders, races, and ethnicities. It is complicated and tragic, but it can be preventable. Knowing the warning signs for suicide and how to get help can help save lives.

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.