



San Juan County Public Hospital District No. 1  
San Juan Island Emergency Medical Services  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – March 26, 2020

To San Juan County Hospital District Residents:

I wanted to write to you and assure you that the San Juan County Public Hospital District No. 1 is working with all our community partners in our area to stay informed of COVID-19 information for our residents. Although the District office is closed to the public, our work of caring for the public continues every day.

As you may know, our hospital district provides EMS service through San Juan Island EMS (SJIEMS) and contributes financially towards Peace Island Medical Center. We thought we would give you some updates about both.

First, is a COVID-19 Situation Report from Interim Chief Kuetzing of San Juan Island EMS:

The global pandemic has both San Juan County and San Juan Island EMS planning, preparing and modifying our operations in order to deal with the situation. Dr. Corsa, our San Juan County Medical Director, has developed guidelines for our response which are periodically modified as more information becomes available.

Many agencies are having trouble maintaining an adequate supply of masks, gloves, gowns and goggles which serve as personal protective equipment (PPE), but so far we have not. We were able to place orders just ahead of the curve and have a stock of older masks that were purchased through the old Interisland Medical Center. The County has also secured supplies of expired (but unused) masks that can be used if current stocks run out and potentially shared with providers in our county that have need.

So far, we have not experienced an unusual number of calls with patients exhibiting Covid-like or flu-like symptoms. We have modified one ambulance with the aim of expedient decontamination in mind. There have been only a handful of calls where full PPE is required and the process for full turn around to “back in service” status is getting

quicker. Dispatchers have protocols that alert EMS to the need for full PPE before arrival on the scene.

At the County level, an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has been established with a full complement based on the National Incident Management Strategy. Kyle Dodd, a Lt. with San Juan Island Fire and Rescue and an EMT, serves as the Incident Commander. We have people contributing to the EOC command staff, operations, and logistics sections. The County is additionally working on contingency planning regarding resupply for EMS, the Hospital and clinics as well as transport options for care of patients at mainland facilities.

It's very important to monitor patients experiencing mild covid-like symptoms as well as those that they have had contact with, so a surveillance team has been set up to monitor patients. At the time of writing there are 2 confirmed cases in the County with 15 tests pending results and 64 total tests. Work is also occurring developing plans in the eventuality that the mainland Hospitals and PIMC reach capacity.

This concludes Chief Kueting's report.

We have a "Frequently Asked Questions About the Fire & EMS Response to Novel Coronavirus COVID-19" flyer posted on the SJCPHD #1 and SJI EMS websites. It also has phone numbers for all the island EMS and Fire and Rescue Stations should you have additional questions during this time. The county has many resources on their website.

Our commissioners are staying informed of the daily information that the EOC releases for our community are very much paying attention to the situation as it develops.

This is a historic time for us with the outbreak, spread, and prevention of this pandemic disease COVID-19. We all have the opportunity to make a difference for our country and communities. Let's stay informed, abide by the mandates given to us, and help those around us and we will come out the other side a closer community.

Lastly, Peace Health Peace Island Medical Center (PIMC) is a vital health partner the District works with on an ongoing basis. The latest update from Merry-Ann Keane, Chief Administrative Officer of PIMC, on preparedness for the COVID-19 virus at Peace Island Medical Center was released to the public on March 23, 2020. I am including it with this release.

Sincerely,

Panela Hutchins

Superintendent, San Juan county Public Hospital District No. 1

## Friends and Neighbors of San Juan County

FRIDAY HARBOR, Wash., March 23, 2020 –

Dear friends and neighbors of San Juan County,

The COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly changed the world around us. It's disrupted our way of life and created new realities for each of us. It's understandable to find it all unsettling and concerning.

On behalf of PeaceHealth, I want to assure you that we are working purposefully to promote the health and safety of our patients, caregivers and community members during this difficult time.

First and foremost, I'd like to acknowledge our caregivers—both at the bedside and behind the scenes—for their unfaltering dedication to providing safe, compassionate care, 24/7, even in times of great hardship. They are the true healthcare heroes dedicated to serving our community.

Here are some of the steps we've taken to ensure we are prepared to meet the current and anticipated surge in COVID-19 patients:

- Restricted visitors and non-essential individuals who enter the medical center to reduce the risk of transmission.
- Implemented temperature screens for anyone entering our buildings. Those with a temperature or other COVID-19-related symptoms are turned away, including employees.
- Cancelled or postponed all elective procedures to conserve hospital resources for critically ill patients and curb the spread of the virus by limiting the number of otherwise healthy people in our facility.
- Worked in collaboration with San Juan County, EMS, PeaceHealth and other community partners to initiate a communitywide response to the anticipated surge in the number of COVID-19 patients needing hospitalization, including combining resources to meet the growing need for supplies.
- Readied internal areas to triage larger numbers of COVID-19 patients because ED and hospital volumes have declined. Presently, caregivers can safely triage the low number of patients in our Emergency Department using appropriate PPE and precautions.
- Proactively prepared for an external triage site for patients with respiratory symptoms. Applications have been submitted, the testing unit is in place and infection prevention standards will be employed to open the unit when patient volumes exceed our internal capacity.
- Implemented a Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) conservation plan, consistent with CDC PPE conservation strategies utilized in hospitals across the nation to ensure that we are adequately stocked with the resources our caregivers need to remain safe. It isn't business as usual with regard to PPE practices and caregivers are adapting to these changes. We are not in short supply of PPE at this time.

- Prepared for inpatient telemedicine visits for our Emergency Department providers. Links to the platform have been provided to ED physicians and we are ready to implement this step when needed. Outpatient telemedicine for the clinics is coming.

Home assessments were discussed with the county, but we made a decision not to pursue this given our internal focus. While important, at this time, PeaceHealth must keep staff available as part of our surge plan.

We continue to be limited in our ability to test people for the virus and receive timely test results. There are inadequate numbers of test kits and test analyzing capabilities nationwide, and we are actively identifying new sources. Quest laboratories is prioritizing processing COVID-19 tests for PeaceHealth inpatients and results are expected within 24 to 48 hours. Testing opportunities through UW will be implemented soon and should be another option for testing and timelier turnaround. Both options will likely result in an increase in the number of confirmed cases in our facility.

The COVID-19 situation changes quickly, often by the hour, and we will continue to swiftly make changes and adapt as it develops. I want to stress that implementation of a preparedness plan is a staged and coordinated process. We will be ready to meet the need when patient volumes demand it.

We know that many of you are sending us your support, and we can feel it. We've been moved by the outpouring of generous offers to help us with maintaining our PPE supply—whether by sewing surgical masks, donating unopened boxes of N95 masks or simply asking how to be of service. Please email Dana Van Every at [Dvanevery@peacehealth.org](mailto:Dvanevery@peacehealth.org) if you wish to donate. And thank you. Every community donation is valuable and so greatly appreciated.

We are all in this together. We value the trust you place in us to navigate these challenging times, and we are honored to care for this community.

--Merry-Ann Keane, Chief Administrative Officer, PeaceHealth Peace Island Medical Center