



Ali Cummings, the assistant manager for Meals on Wheels at the Mason County Senior Activities Center, prepares chicken Monday morning for deliveries the following day. Anyone in Mason County ages 60 and older can have two week's worth of meals delivered by the nonprofit Meals on Wheels. Journal photo by Gordon Weeks

COVID-19 measures closing Mason County doors

Governor's decree sends many home for at least two weeks

By Gordon Weeks
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On Monday, shoppers at the Shelton Fred Meyer for the first time were directed to stand on a blue-taped "X" at the entrance to checkout stands to create "social distancing" from fellow customers.

Across the parking lot, employees at the drive-thru window at Burger King were holding out rectangular plastic containers to patrons to place their cash and cards, and returning change in the same manner. The dining area was closed.

On Monday morning, Ma-

son Transit Authority reduced bus service and announced further route reductions might be on the way — ridership was down 70%, "and as good stewards, we feel it is in the best interest of the public to reduce service to save resources as well as assist with social distancing," the agency stated in a news release.

All those precautions were already in place hours before Gov. Jay Inslee on Monday afternoon issued his "Stay at Home, Stay Healthy" order in the state that will be effective for at least two weeks. The order requires every Washingtonian to stay at home, except

for people pursuing an "essential" activity, such as shopping for groceries or going to a medical appointment; getting takeout food, with food deliveries also permitted; going outside for walks and exercise, as long as social distancing of 6 feet is maintained; or going to work for an "essential business," which includes health care/public health workers, emergency services providers, food and agriculture workers, energy providers, water and wastewater workers, transportation providers, communications and information technology providers, and others.

The governor's orders prohibit all gatherings of people for social, spiritual and recreational purposes. This applies to both private and public gatherings, including sleepovers for children, weddings and funerals.

Grocery stores, pharmacies, gas stations and food supply chains are among the businesses that remain open.

MEALS ON WHEELS

The coronavirus has been particularly devastating to older people with health problems, and many seniors are staying home.

Anyone in Mason County ages 60 and older can have two week's worth of meals delivered by the nonprofit Meals

on Wheels. For more information, call 360-426-3697.

The meals are cooked and assembled at the Mason County Senior Activities Center at The Pavilion in Shelton. The Pavilion is closed, and the senior lunches are not being served there.

"It's all we're doing right now, delivering meals," said Debra Del-Bosque, the site manager for Meals on Wheels. She added, "Anyone who is 60 or older should not be going out at all."

The drivers make 20 stops and drop off 14 meals.

Meals on Wheels soon will need more volunteer drivers, Del-Bosque said.

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Lucky Dog Casino, shown Monday on the Skokomish Reservation, is closed, along with all other entertainment venues statewide, for at least two weeks. Journal photo by Justin Johnson

Closures: MTA, utilities offer advice, updates on service

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"Cash donations to buy more food would be amazing," she said.

For the Meals on Wheels patrons, Verle's in Shelton donated 100 packages of toilet paper, each containing four rolls.

Every client receives a four-pack. Verle's also donated Reese's Peanut Butter Cups.

"Chocolate is good for the soul," Del-Bosque said.

MASON TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Mason Transit Authority advises riders to check the agency's website or call customer service at 360-426-9434 during business hours to ensure they have accurate schedule information. Additional service might be canceled on a day-to-day basis if MTA has a shortage of drivers, MTA states.

"During this time, we ask that our riders keep trips to essential needs, stay home if not feeling well and practice proactive hygiene to help protect our drivers and other passengers. Make sure to cover mouth and nose if coughing or sneezing, wash hands regularly with soap and hot water or use hand sanitizer, do not touch your face with your hands, and keep distance from other passengers as much as possible. We also ask that you to enter the bus from the rear door.

"MTA is cleaning buses regularly and wiping down surfaces as much as possible between routes. We have closed the atrium at the Transit-Community Center, but the T-CC is still open for customer service at this time."

SHELTON CINEMAS AND SKYLINE DRIVE-IN

Like other movie theaters around the state, Shelton Cinemas closed its doors about two weeks ago. The Skyline Drive-In in Shelton was set to open, but legally can't.

Dorothea Mayes owns both businesses.

"It's a painful situation ... Every small business in the state is going to



LEFT: On Monday, Mason Transit Authority reduced services to save resources and assist with social distancing. Ridership is down 70 percent, the agency reported. RIGHT: Shelton Cinemas is closed, and the Skyline Drive-In will not open. "Every small business in the state is going to be hurting," said Dorothea Mayes, who owns both businesses. Journal photos by Gordon Weeks

be hurting," she said.

Mayes said she agonized over whether to open the drive-in, which would provide social distancing not available in a theater; she said she wants to be "socially responsible." Two weeks ago, Gov. Inslee told drive-in owners they could open, she said.

On Monday night, drive-in movie theaters were not listed as "essential services" among the businesses that could remain open.

"Now the choice is gone," she said.

Mayes added, "I need the drive-in business. I need the summertime business to make it through the winter."

Mayes said she hopes moviegoers will return to her theaters when the restrictions are lifted and they can open again.

HOOD CANAL COMMUNICATIONS

In a message to customers on Monday, Hood Canal Communications announced it is postponing its annual cable rate increase until further notice

"in continuing with our customer relief efforts in response to the coronavirus outbreak."

"You may have received a notice that our rates are increasing on April 1," HCC wrote to customers. "This notice was scheduled to go out for our annual cable TV rate increase which takes place every year in April 1st and in the current chaos, the notice was not suspended. You will receive an updated notification soon indicating the annual rate increase has been postponed. We apologize for the confusion."

In a newsletter released Tuesday morning, HCC wrote that it is considered an "essential service" and will remain open.

"While our offices are closed to the public and many of our employees are working remotely, we are available by phone, email and social media to keep you connected, informed and safe. If you need assistance with your service, call or email us as usual. Thank you for being a loyal customer and please stay safe!"

For more information, call 360-898-



2481 or visit www.hcc.net.

MASON COUNTY GARBAGE & RECYCLING

Mason County Garbage & Recycling is asking customers to ensure garbage is not left unsecured for pickup.

"Bagging loose garbage helps ensure items do not litter the surrounding area when your garbage driver is servicing your cart or container, but more importantly, it will limit exposure to our employees," the company stated in a news release. "Effective immediately, garbage drivers will be instructed to not service any loose or unsecured garbage items outside of your cart or container.

"All extra units must be fully contained in a sealed disposable container or properly sealed bag. This is a precaution during the COVID-19 crisis and we ask for your assistance to help keep our employees and community members safe."

For more information, call 360-426-8729 or email cust2149@wasteconnections.com.