



PSA

Date: July 27, 2020
To: All Media
From: Stephanie Krell, PIO for Unified Command Team
Subject: **Mask Donations to Faith Based Communities**

To support safely continuing to worship, local officials distributed masks to over a dozen churches in Wasco County recently. Each interested church received 200 KN95 masks as well as 12 bottles of hand sanitizer.

The masks are intended to serve as a backup supply in case people forget to bring their own masks to church, said Debby Jones, Wasco County's prevention specialist, who is helping with COVID-19 response. "So it was more so no one would have to leave" if they showed up without a mask, she said.

Most of the larger churches in The Dalles picked up masks, she said. Churches in Mosier, Dufur, Maupin, Wamic and Tygh Valley also received the masks and hand sanitizer.

Churches in Sherman County got about 1,500 masks in early June, said Sherman County Emergency Services Director Shawn Payne. Gilliam County had a request from one church for masks, said Chris Fitzsimmons, emergency management coordinator for Gilliam County. She believes most churches already had their own masks before a state shipment of masks arrived.

Through a survey of churches, Jones learned many churches with older populations were holding off on in-person services until the fall and were providing on-line services. "I really give our faith leaders a lot of credit for finding ways to keep people connected and supported spiritually," Jones said.

She has also worked to convey to church leaders that “we know it’s an important part of worship, but this really is not the time to sing. That’s a way the virus is transmitted much easier.”

Emergency operation officials have also distributed 26,400 masks to every community in Wasco County and another 22,900 masks were given to local governments, including the city of The Dalles, Wasco County government, and North Central Public Health District.

Sherman County has distributed 9,000 masks to businesses and 500 masks to each town in the county and Gilliam County has also distributed thousands of masks to its communities.

Churches interested in receiving masks can call Lynette Black at 503-806-7132 for pick up on Monday, July 27.

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