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News release

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Health Department announces two new COVID-19 fatalities

The Butte-Silver Bow Health Department announced Monday that two county residents have recently died of COVID-19 related illness.

The two fatalities bring to a total of 90 Butte-Silver Bow residents who've died due to COVID-19.

Health Officer Karen Sullivan said that 13 people were hospitalized Monday with COVID-19 at St. James Healthcare, 10 of them Butte-Silver Bow residents. Three of the 13 were in the hospital's intensive care unit, with two of the ICU patients on ventilators. Of the 13 hospitalized, 10 were not vaccinated against COVID-19.

For the epidemiological week of Aug. 21 through Aug. 27, 92 cases were newly confirmed, averaging a little more than 13 cases daily. An additional 17 cases were confirmed to be positive over the weekend, on Saturday and Sunday. Of the 92 cases from the last epidemiological week, 43 percent were vaccinated, while 57 percent were either unvaccinated or partially vaccinated.

Amanda Marinovich, epidemiologist with the Health Department, said Monday that vaccination percentages may be skewed "because the same people who are not going to get vaccinated may be the same people who are not going and getting tested. The true number of unvaccinated people with the virus is likely higher than is reflected in our numbers."

As of mid-Monday, the Health Department was reporting 115 active cases, with the median age of these active cases at 33. More than 18 percent of the active cases were those ages 0-18.

"We are working very closely with the K-12 school districts to monitor COVID-19 activity, particularly since those under the age of 12 cannot yet be vaccinated," Sullivan said.

The county recently conducted testing at Metro Sewer, and the SARS-CoV-2 virus continues to be detected in wastewater.

As of Monday, the Health Department was reporting a test positivity rate of 6.8 percent – the percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19 over a given time period. The department was also reporting 39.60 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population. The Harvard Global Health Institute says that communities sustaining more than 25 cases per 100,000 population should be implementing mitigation measures, such as mask-wearing and social distancing.

"We are asking county residents to take every precaution when in public areas," Sullivan said. "And we are obviously asking people to get vaccinated."

COVID-19 vaccines are widely available, with several pop-up clinics planned as follows:



THE CITY-COUNTY OF Butte-Silver Bow

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- Wednesday, Sept. 1, Montana Tech Courtyard, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Thursday, Sept. 2, Butte-Silver Bow Health Department west-side entrance, 9 a.m.-noon
- Thursday, Sept. 2, Vaccine Sweepstakes, Butte Civic Center, 1-2:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Sept. 4, Farmers Market in Uptown Butte, 10 a.m.-noon

Vaccines are also available at Safeway on Massachusetts; Walgreens; CVS; Walmart; the Medical Arts Pharmacy next to St. James Healthcare; the Butte-Silver Bow Health Department; and Southwest Montana Community Health Center.

As of Monday, 61 percent of Butte-Silver Bow's eligible population – those ages 12 and up – were fully vaccinated, putting the county at No. 2 in the state for vaccination rate, behind Missoula County, which stands at 63 percent of its eligible population fully vaccinated.

The \$525,000 Butte-Silver Bow COVID-19 Vaccine Sweepstakes continues. Five winners of two \$10,000 awards and three \$5,000 awards are announced weekly, with the next announcement scheduled Thursday at 2 p.m. at the Butte Civic Center. The sweepstakes continues through Sept. 30.

Sullivan said \$350,000 has been awarded to 50 individuals since June 24. Butte-Silver Bow residents who are fully vaccinated are automatically entered into the sweepstakes.

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