

Mask mandate lifting early, March 12

New date comes after CDC updated guidelines

Gov. Jay Inslee announced on Monday, Feb. 28 that Washington state will be lifting the indoor mask mandate on March 12, nine days earlier than previously announced.

The masking requirements will be lifted effective 11:59 p.m. on March 11 and new indoor mask policies and

recommendations will come into effect.

"We've continued to monitor data from our state Department of Health and have determined we are able to adjust the timing of our statewide mask requirement. While this represents another step forward for Washingtonians, we must still be mindful that many within our communities remain vulnerable," Inslee said in a statement.

Beginning March 12,

face masks will no longer be required in most indoor settings, including schools.

Sunnyside School District responded to the announcement by sending a letter to families stating that beginning Monday, March 14, "Parents will have the option to choose whether or not their children wear masks in school buildings."

The school district encourages students and staff to be respectful of everyone's choices. "Our district will

not tolerate bullying of any kind for those who choose to continue wearing masks or for those who choose not to wear a mask," according to the letter.

The CDC has also lifted the federal mask mandate for school buses; however, all school children and bus drivers are required to continue to mask up until March 12.

"I'm happy to see that Governor Inslee moved up the lifting of the mask

mandate," said Yakima County Commissioner LaDon Linde. "And that the CDC lifted the federal restrictions for school buses last Friday."

Currently, all other modes of public transportation are still requiring masks.

The school district has stated that if any student expresses any anxiety, they may reach out to school counselors or psychologists for additional support as needed.

Under the new CDC guidelines, universal mask usage is only recommended in areas with high disease activity, such as health care settings such as hospitals, outpatient and dental offices, long term care settings, and correctional facilities.

Private businesses and local governments can still choose to implement vaccination or face mask requirements for workers or customers.

27-year-old Grandview woman killed in high-speed collision

GRANDVIEW — Deputies from the Yakima County Sheriff's Office, Grandview Police Department officers, and Lower Valley Fire Department responded to a report of a high speed two vehicle collision at the intersection of Forsell and Hornby Roads.

Responders arrived to find a 1997 Honda Accord and a 2012 Dodge Durango off the roadway on the northwest corner of the intersection.

Celeste Rodriguez, 25, of Grandview and Haile Howe, 27, also of Grandview, were in the Honda Accord. Esteban Trevino, 41, of Grandview was alone in the Dodge Durango.

Authorities say their initial investigation shows Rodriguez, who was driving the Accord, was going north on Hornby Rd., and was

driving over the posted 50 mph speed limit according to a witness.

According to the Yakima County Sheriff's Office, Rodriguez failed to stop at the stop sign and entered the intersection with Forsell Rd., where the front of her car was struck by the Durango. The impact of the crash caused both cars to go off the road and up a bank at the northwest corner of the intersection.

Howe was pronounced dead at the scene.

Rodriguez and Trevino were transported by ambulance to Astria Sunnyside Hospital. Officials report Rodriguez suffered fractures, while Trevino sustained minor injuries.

The crash is currently under investigation by the Yakima County Sheriff's Office Traffic Unit.



photos by Job Wise/Sunnyside Sun

A commercial structure fire at Nutrien Ag Solutions, 1101 Midvale Rd., started from smoldering sulfur, Monday Feb. 28 at approximately 1 p.m.

Fire at Nutrien forces evacuations

■ **JOB WISE**
General Manager

A commercial structure fire at Nutrien Ag Solutions, 1101 Midvale Rd., started from smoldering sulfur, Monday Feb. 28 at approximately 1 p.m.

The southside storage building at the fertilizer facility was destroyed by the fire. "We still don't have an estimated damage cost," said Chief Ken Anderson. "The estimated footprint of the damaged property however is roughly 18,000 square feet."

Sunnyside Firefighters arrived on scene just after 1 p.m. As of 10 p.m. Monday, one West Benton firefighter was evaluated for chemical burns and released. Firefighting operations extended through Monday night and into Tuesday.

Midvale Road was closed from Emerald to Duffy Roads. The residents in that

half mile radius from the scene were evacuated.

"We had 17 families evacuated," said Sunnyside City Manager Elizabeth Alba.

Travelers were cautioned to avoid traveling on South 1st Street to allow emergency personnel through.

An incident command center and shelter opened Monday afternoon for anyone that needed care and a safe place at the Sunnyside Community Center, 1521 S. 1st Street.

Although no one utilized the shelter, the city was prepared with food, water and the services of the American Red Cross at the community center.

Chief Kamiakin and Pioneer Elementary were put in Shelter in Place and had their HVAC systems turned off due to the chemical fire. According to the wind and weather patterns these two

schools were in the direct path of the smoke and chemicals in the air. The students were not dismissed due to the Shelter in Place order.

Sunnyside School District announced at 4 p.m. Monday that students at the elementary schools were allowed be picked up by their designated pick up person, by going into the school to sign them out. A line of cars and parents formed at the front offices of both schools.

The schools gave the "all clear" at 5:10 p.m. when they released the rest of the students. "By 6:20 p.m. all students were home," said Jessica Morgan, Communications Director for Sunnyside School District.

Harrison Middle School and Sunnyside High School students were already released for the day. The high school outside sports practices were moved inside various school

gyms. The high school and middle school's HVAC systems were also shut down.

The City of Sunnyside requested that all citizens shelter in their homes, turn off HVAC units, and keep door and windows shut. Residents were also told that the police would inform them if they needed also to evacuate.

The evacuation notice was lifted at 9 a.m. Tuesday by Yakima Valley Emergency Management team.

On Tuesday afternoon, Sunnyside Fire, Public Works, and Vanbelle Excavating personnel added six to seven loads of sand atop the remaining sulfur pile, according to Chief Anderson.

As of press time, "the fire is under control and property has been released to Nutrien personnel," said Chief Anderson.

TIME TO DANCE



Andrew Hamill/Sunnyside Sun

Miss Sunnyside Alex Zieske organized and participated in the Valentine's Day Dance on Saturday, Feb. 26 at the Senior Center, 1400 Federal Way. The event included music and dancing, light refreshments, and an opportunity for seniors in the lower valley to connect in a social setting.

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