



Clallam County Fire District 3

Motto: Serve, Respect, Prevent and Protect

Statement from Chief Regarding the Pandemic

(March 16, 2020)

By: Ben Andrews, Fire Chief

All,

Yesterday I published a post on my personal Facebook account regarding the Covid-19 situation and my personal views. That post has generated a lot of responses asking me to share my thoughts on a larger scale. At a Covid-19 planning meeting this morning I was asked to publish it both to staff and to the community on the District's public Facebook page. Please take it as it was written, a heartfelt request for people to act responsibly and to shy away from extremism on either end. My family, my close friends, and you mean a great deal to me and I want us all to get through this tough time as best we can. I will be sending out more information to keep you updated on what is going on. I am going from meeting to meeting today, but wanted to get this out as soon as I was able. So below is what was posted yesterday on my page.

Please read the articles I am sharing. I think it much more prudent to err on the side of caution rather than to be cavalier about our current situation.

*Disclaimer 1: I have fact checked Mr. Warner's reputation but not his numbers, I hate math.

*Disclaimer 2: My thoughts and feelings expressed here are mine alone and not necessarily representative of any organization I am affiliated with.

I have been asked by many about my opinion regarding the Covid-19 situation. I am reluctant to say what I think because I am by no means an epidemiologist or a virologist. However, I have a fair bit of experience with emergencies, emergency medicine, our healthcare system, and government operations. I have had training and experience in large-scale disasters. I am also a student of history and human nature. Realizing how isolated (from major resources and distribution systems) and fragile (medically and economically) our local community is, led me to make disaster preparedness one of my priorities at work. We have been holding out the Cascadia Earthquake as the worst-case scenario. This pandemic is not demolishing buildings, roads, the electrical grid, communication, or causing thousands of traumatic injuries. This is relatively manageable compared to Cascadia.

When you read Mr. Warner's information about impact on health care systems, keep in mind the capacity of our local hospital. Keep in mind the difficulty we already have accessing primary health care. Keep in mind that we have four paramedic units to serve 35,000 people over 145 square miles. When people say "We are not in King County" I agree with them 100% and remind them that we don't have nearly the healthcare capacity or emergency medical capacity of King County. Our health care system was at capacity before the pandemic arrived.

Those who know me, know that I am a pretty a moderate person. I avoid extremes on most issues, except dogs.

What I am seeing and hearing in our community is both disappointing and frustrating. I am mostly hearing two views.

1. It is the plague. Hoard, hide, and impose martial law, every person for themselves.
2. This is nothing. This is panic and fear mongering, go about life as normal. Do not give up your wants and conveniences as this is a false scare. We don't have a single case of Covid-19 in Clallam County (that has been confirmed.... through limited testing.... of a limited number of sick people).

To me, both extremes are self-centered and irresponsible.

I think "rational" lies somewhere in between. People being intentional about reducing risk is reasonable. Giving up conveniences, entertainment, social activities for a relatively short time period is reasonable. Taking a hit to the economy (which has historically always recovered) for a short period of time, for the sake of reducing, shortening, and minimizing the risk to the health of our friends, family, and neighbors (who may not recover) is reasonable.

I do hear people say if you are sick, stay home, that will solve this. Those same people come to work or send their kids to events coughing and sneezing. I hear " it is just a cold, not Corona virus." or "I don't want to use my sick leave unless I have too". You know what? I do not want your cold or flu either. The fact is we are humans and can be self-centered. Things become mandatory because people do not voluntarily comply.

As you know, I have family in Spain. Leah has a friend in Japan, and we have a friend in Poland. They are all saying the same thing. "We should have taken this much more seriously in the beginning" and " there was nothing, then it exploded so rapidly it is unbelievable" and "I went from laughing at people preparing one week, to being afraid for my health the next". These are first hand from people I have a relationship with. Not the media, not the government, but people I care about. Japan has been in forced quarantine in home for more than a week. Poland has closed borders. Spain will be in forced quarantine Monday, only able to leave for healthcare, food, and assisting elderly/disabled. One of my Basque families gave me permission to share part of our conversation. It is attached to this post.

Is the world going to end if either extreme continues? No. Is it going to be more difficult than it needs to be? That remains to be seen.

I hope in the near future we can get to moderation.

Avoid community wide transmission AND avoid forced in-home quarantine.

Avoid overwhelming an already fragile EMS and Healthcare system and avoid destroying the economy for a long period of time.

Please take a few minutes to read what I have attached as you decide what is best for you and your family. Please respect the decisions our family make regarding how my family responds to this event.

<https://m.facebook.com/jason.scott.warner/posts/10163742243430144?d=m>

<https://www.marketwatch.com/.../spain-may-be-a-week-ahead-of-...>

<https://www.forbes.com/.../why-everything-is-closing-for-co.../...>

The idea is to stop spreading the flue that is very very easy to spread

12:59 PM

The people here say that it's unnecessary and going to ruin the economy because people are not working, business is not selling.

12:59 PM ✓

We dont know anything who is ill still but it affects seriously to old people and there is the risk to collapse the health system if too many people become ill and go to hospitsls

1:00 PM

We also didn't take it seriously enough until now that it is spreading so quickly

1:02 PM

And your health system is much stronger than ours

1:02 PM ✓

That is what I am afraid of , not taking it seriously

1:03 PM ✓

You

The people here say that it's unnecessary and going to ruin the economy because people are not working, business is not selling.

It's going to ruin the economy for sure but the health is more important than that right now

1:03 PM

Type a message

