



# MEDIA RELEASE

## San Juan County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 26, 2020

### **New Cases in San Juan County**

Two new positive COVID test results have been reported in San Juan County, one for an Orcas Island resident, and one for a resident of San Juan Island.

Both cases appear to have come from off-island contact with infected individuals. These are the 34<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> cases in San Juan County. The cases are not connected.

The San Juan County Health & Community Services contact tracing team has been working diligently to identify and communicate with individuals who may have been exposed, including coordinating with Health Departments from other jurisdictions. At this time, all close contacts in the islands have been notified.

These cases are timely reminders of some key messages:

-The first is that while the islands have been nearly COVID free since August, the risk of transmission to the island community is very real and is increasing as case counts spike across Washington and the United States as a whole. Islanders should expect to see more local cases in the weeks to come. The third national surge in cases is well underway, and as with previous waves, the islands will eventually be impacted.

-Secondly, many of us in the islands have lowered our guard due to the low local case count. Assumptions that we've made recently about risk and safety may need to be adjusted quickly as the situation changes. We need to stay alert and flexible and be ready to revise our approach and revert to a more conservative stance to ensure the health of our community. Travel plans may need to change, community events rescheduled, or activities scaled back. It is not only a question of preventing a single transmission, but even more importantly, of working to build habits that help all of us avoid community spread when a case does occur.

-And finally, few of us have the luxury of truly living in a COVID-safe bubble, and we all need to work hard not to shame or blame those who do test positive. Our neighbors deserve our support, and the very last thing we want is for people to hesitate to share information with public health staff out of a fear of being ostracized by their community. As with so much, empathy and thoughtfulness matter, now more than ever.

Please continue to do the right thing. The islands have weathered this storm with grace and tolerance, but we're not through it yet. Please keep up the good work.