

**Benton-Franklin
Health District**
www.bfhd.wa.gov

Kennewick
7102 West Okanogan Place

Pasco
412 West Clark Street

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**Benton-Franklin Health
District Website**
www.bfhd.wa.gov

**Washington Department
of Health**
www.doh.wa.gov

**Centers for Disease
Control**
www.cdc.gov

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Benton-Franklin Health District Internal Audit Reveals Additional Bi-County COVID-19 Deaths

Kennewick, Wash. – Benton-Franklin Health District is committed to reporting complete and accurate information on all COVID-19 cases and resulting community deaths for a full picture of disease activity and burden in our counties. The District epidemiologist evaluates every death certificate during the COVID-19 response to determine which county residents' deaths are directly attributed to COVID-19 infection. If an individual had COVID-19 at the time of their death, but did not die as a result of the infection, the death is not counted as a COVID-19 death and is not reported in the District's daily case count.

Late last week, the District epidemiologist discovered two deaths linked to a recent outbreak that were not originally noted. One of those deaths was removed as "new" because this male's death was previously connected and reported to a different outbreak. The other male's death was missed because the family listed his residence in a different state on his death certificate even though he was residing in Benton County. The discovery of these two anomalies prompted Benton-Franklin Health District's data analysis team to complete a thorough audit of all local deaths with COVID-19 on the death certificate from March until present. That audit was completed yesterday afternoon.

It is important to note it can take weeks or longer for the District to receive community members' death information due to the reporting process with the associated medical facility, the Coroner's office and the Vital Records department issuing and releasing the death certificate.

This week's audit discovered 30 deaths associated with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis that needed further review. After a thorough review of the death certificates, it has been determined that 14 of those deaths were as a direct result of COVID-19 infection and not other causes. The timeframe for these 14 deaths was July 17, 2020 through September 18, 2020, with July being an especially high death month in our counties. Four of those 14 community members died in a different county and were never reported to Benton-Franklin Health District. The remaining 10 community member deaths were missed through the process of Vital Records reporting and data analysis review.

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These community member deaths are being reported today, however, death numbers do not show up on the Benton-Franklin Health District case count page for 24-hours. Because the system does not update on the weekend, the deaths will reflect in the case count data table on Monday, October 12, 2020.

Benton-Franklin Health District recognizes the importance of accuracy and transparency in reporting data to our community and stakeholders and sincerely regrets the information was missed. Because of this discovery, a new, thorough auditing process has been developed as a part of the review and reporting process.

It is imperative to recognize each and every death reported during this pandemic is not just a number. These are community members whose lives were taken too soon by complications from this terrible virus - and whose friends and families are still feeling the impacts of those losses. The BFHD team sends condolences to everyone who is grieving the death of loved ones who have passed away during this pandemic.

The following is a list of lives lost which are being reported today:

Benton County

- Female in her 60's with no underlying health conditions
- Female in her 50's with underlying health conditions
- Female in her 90's with underlying health conditions
- Male in his 80's with underlying health conditions
- Male in his 80's with underlying health conditions
- Male in his 50's with underlying health conditions
- Male in his 40's with underlying health conditions

Franklin County

- Female in her 90's with no underlying health conditions
- Female in her 70's with underlying health conditions
- Female in her 60's with underlying conditions
- Male in his 70's with underlying health conditions
- Male in his 80's with underlying health conditions
- Male in his 70's with no underlying health conditions
- Male in his 60's with underlying health conditions

The link to our Case Count page is:

<https://www.bfhd.wa.gov/cms/One.aspx?portalId=10766056&pageId=16584954>.

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