

Media Availability, March 5

Dave Somers: Thank you, good morning everybody, thanks for joining us today good to see you all this has been a really exciting week. On a number of levels on Tuesday, President Biden said he wanted to get all pre K through 12 educators and staff vaccinated. And then Governor Inslee followed up quickly with his own directive and I've been supportive of getting our teachers and staff vaccinated for some time now. So that our kids can get back to school as quickly and safely as possible and families can start to get back into a little bit something more resembling normal. So that's very exciting so part of that will be getting our economy back up and functioning again so this would be extremely helpful. I do hope the federal government is able to dramatically increase our supply of vaccines and we've got some good news on that front coming up here in a minute. But our biggest limiting factor is still our ability to quickly back in their residence and having supply that the supply is our biggest hurdle at this point, still but it's it is getting better. I'm also really pleased Governor Inslee has given the timeline for backsliding grocery workers and others who've been on the front line of the pandemic for this year that'll be very helpful. I will know we've given at least one dose of vaccine to over 100,000 of Snohomish county residents, and that means we're well on our way to reaching our goal, which is approximately 650,000 adults. We can be vaccinated Chris, we need a larger supply every week, we hope to get there, and the sooner the better, but we've made great progress we're going to keep at it so. As you know, the partnerships here in Snohomish county or would really give me the great optimism about where we are right now. We have three vaccines available now it's knowledge county we have put in place the infrastructure to vaccinate everyone in the county. And we can begin to see that lines of how we get the pandemic behind us so I'm very pleased with, where we are. The moment we just all need to stay vigilant- got a little ways to go here but make sure we continue the positive progress so with that I'm going to turn it over to Dr Spitters of the Snohomish Health District.

Chris Spitters: Well, thank you Executive Somers, and I share your optimism and good morning everyone today I'd like to give a few quick updates on vaccines being administered and allocated. New changes to the vaccine prioritization phases and also make a couple of comments about the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. First, yesterday afternoon we published our slightly revamped matrix of vaccine numbers online at snowhd.org/forward-slash-covert-vaccine. We think it provides a clear summary of our status and progress to date in this vaccine rollout we hope you find the same when you look at it. It shows that nearly 28,000 doses were administered last week, bringing us to a total of just over 160,000 doses given from December 17 through February 27 of those doses. 106,000 were first doses and 54,000 were second doses now this week brought mix news on the allocation front last week we received around 31,000 doses. But this week's allocation for some homeless Snohomish county providers was just 13,000 again keep in mind that we think our capacity to administer vaccine is closer to 50,000. doses per week so of those 13,000 doses allocated to health care providers in Snohomish county for this coming week only 3000 are for this week only 3000 word for first doses. Now that's nowhere near the supply needed to meet the demand and the velocity necessary to get the emergency vaccination rollout completed within four to six months. Fortunately, the Health District also received 5000 doses of the newly authorized Johnson and Johnson vaccine, bringing the total allocation for the county to 17,000. This week mentioned more on that Johnson and Johnson vaccine, in a few minutes, looking ahead, we will be getting next

week's projected allocation shared with us from the state health department, this weekend. We get a lot of questions about this vaccine allocation and distribution process so I'm just going to try to give a quick overview. First, the Federal Government allocates and distribute some vaccines directly to vaccinators and we do not always have visibility on that this includes the long term care partnership with CVs and Walgreens to help vaccinate residents and staff living in long term care. Specifically skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities, then there's also the federal retail pharmacy program that ships to other chains in Snohomish county like rite aid Costco, Kroger, Walmart and Safeway/Albertsons. Then there's another allocation that goes to the State Department of Health on a weekly basis, the State Department of Health now has a three week forecast of state allocations from the Federal Government for planning purposes, but this allocation is not. doesn't branch down to the county level, so our allocation at the local level still comes to us on a week to week basis but it's reassuring that the State forecast shows stable or modest increases ahead. Each week the state allocates vaccine from that limited supply to enroll providers through a multi step process that starts on Saturdays so enrolled providers meaning. Healthcare systems and clinics throughout the county place there recurrent request through the state's immunization information system. directly to the State health department, this is completed by Thursday night to meet a Friday morning deadline that CDC has for closing out requests. Over the weekend providers, then find out if their requests were approved or denied for the coming week and informed of expected doses and arrival dates. decisions are made by the State health department on those requests from vaccine providers based on several factors. The proportional population of those eligible in the county relative to the statewide number eligible completeness of data reporting by vaccinating providers in Snohomish county. Vaccination providers current inventory and documented throughput and measures of equity, they also look to ensure access at all provider types like hospitals pharmacies mass vaccination sites and clinics. This know how much Health District has an oversight role in ensuring providers are properly storing transporting and documenting the vaccines. If providers aren't using their supply quickly enough aren't following guidelines or aren't keeping up with the date data entry into the state immunization information system. Then they are at risk of losing future allocations, remember, though, that allocation decisions are made at the State level, not at the county level. moving from allocation to eligibility, there were a lot of announcements this week. First, as Executive Somers mentioned, President Biden announced efforts to get a first dose of vaccine into all K to 12 staff and teachers and into childcare providers, by the end of the month in response Governor Inslee included these. school and childcare staff in an expanded phase one B one effective immediately, while also emphasizing that the state's. Emphasis remains on getting a first dose into older adults as well. Vaccines supply for teachers and childcare workers will come in part from that federal retail pharmacy program I mentioned earlier. This know how much Health District, has also been working over the last several weeks to match up all K to 12 schools with pharmacies or clinics in their area to help with vaccine clinics for teachers and staff. These resources are in addition to other vaccine providers in the area, including the mass vaccination sites for more information on vaccine locations in Snohomish county and surrounding areas, people can visit the State Department of Health and vaccine Finder online. also worth noting the turns administration periods puget sound health care system also announced this week that they are now vaccinating veterans of all ages eligible veterans can call to 067165716 to schedule, or they can directly contact their va primary care provider team. Governor Inslee also announced modifications to forthcoming phases one B two through one before, as well as timelines to begin each group. Do ah realize released more information on

that guidance last night and we'll be putting a link for that into the chat box. This is good news for many, but it also increases the number of people eligible for seeking a finite and fixed number of vaccines available for each week. So please be patient and know that the entire system, including the Health District, and the county are working together as quickly as we can to try to get a dose or two doses were appropriate into everyone, so you may not get your vaccine today or this week, but keep trying, you will get one soon. Lastly, I want to cover a couple of points about the Johnson and Johnson vaccine first about the name of the vaccine it's now. I think affectionately are commonly referred to as the Johnson and Johnson vaccine or the J and J vaccine, you may also hear the term Janssen. Janssen, which is a subsidiary of Johnson and Johnson, that is engaged in vaccine production so it's your also might see Janssen vaccine but we'll try to stick with Johnson and Johnson because that's what people understand. So while we have received our first shipments, this week the State Department of Health doesn't anticipate any further shipments of J&J vaccine. Until the week of March 22 that's simply a supply issue at the manufacturer level. Now that may change but remember that it does take a while for a newly authorized vaccine to ramp up production and distribution. And with the three vaccines now available we're hearing people calling around trying to find out where their preferred vaccine is being offered. And, as somebody who's reviewed all the FDA and CDC guidance on this. I want to reassure you that while you may think you have a preference on which vaccine you like to get they're all safe and effective and it's really best not to wait. For another vaccine to be available if you can get one today unless you've spoken with your doctor and there are some specific medical reason to avoid a certain brand of vaccine. But in this in the FDA and CDC guidance, there are no medical reasons to choose one vaccine over another, other than pre existing allergy to one of the vaccine components. The centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourages people to get the first vaccine, they can that's available and the Health District strongly endorses that recommendation. As a reminder, even after being vaccinated people should wear a mask and shared places avoid gatherings stay home if you feel wash your hands and clean and sanitized frequently touch surfaces, particularly in group settings. Please keep up with these preventive measures, while we work through to get more people vaccinated and exit from the emergency of this pandemic so with that I'll now turn it over to our director of emergency management with Snohomish county, Jason Bierman. Jason.

Jason Biermann: Thanks Dr Spitters. From the emergency management and the vaccine Task Force and all first of all, good morning everyone sorry good morning everyone, I just wanted to share. We do have some exciting news from our end, we will be opening our fifth mass vaccination site today at the Angel of the Winds Arena in Everett. This site is one of the sites, we had planned, it will be walk in we are still limited in the amount of vaccine, we have available, so it will not be operating at full hours today But we will open it and begin the process of going through and ensuring all of the procedures and everything are in place In anticipation of getting more vaccine in the near future and also meeting the demand as the phases, open up and additional people become eligible to to come in and get vaccinated as I think Dr spinners and Executive Somers both mentioned this site will be using the Johnson and Johnson vaccine So we're excited that this will be certainly the first in the county and we believe, perhaps the first in the state that will actually be rolling out use of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine And just a you know, a short note for the folks who are looking at the where vaccines were available, the bottom line is the best vaccine is the one that you're able to get, especially now in vaccines are in short supply, and we are

working against you know, a high demand and a low availability of vaccine Please make an appointment, when you can and get the vaccine that's available in terms of the actual site an angel the winds, we will also be transitioning their to a system called prep mode That will be the signup system for your appointments that's the same system that's being used by the State Department of Health and a number of other counties Our goal with utilizing prep mode is to make sure that we can streamline the record keeping which is fairly onerous at our mass vaccination sites and, ultimately, we will With the mass vaccination sites in Everett as well as the one in Monroe in Arlington we will be using this system consistently at those sites, so that we can streamline the experience for folks who are coming in to get an appointment In terms of the overall effort the site at angel the winds will be one of three that is open today We will also have the admins college point of distribution and the Boeing activity Center will also both be open, today, we will still will have both the Monroe fairgrounds and the Arlington airports open as vaccine is available And we plan to continue to do so in the future we'll also have two other sites that will be readily available to activate when vaccine more vaccine becomes available Right now, we have one location that we're planning in South county to bring additional capacity in South county and another drive and that will be a walk in location and another drive through That will be in North county at boom city and finally in and among all the other mass vaccination activity, there are other activities going on To ensure that we're bringing vaccine out to the folks who are most at risk Right now, in Snohomish county all 18 of our skilled nursing facilities and 46 Assisted Living facilities have had on site vaccination clinics There are 615 adult family homes in Snohomish county, the last of the first dose clinics for these adult family homes will be finished up this week Second dose clinics are already underway, and I want to highlight the partnership we've had with several of our fire EMS agencies to help us bring vaccine out to those folks we've also worked as a task force to partner with homage and did a vaccine clinic Yesterday, for our vulnerable older adults 100 doses being administered there and we're working closely with Providence Institute for healthier communities To provide vaccines for them so that they can also provide vaccines to marginalized communities so again we're very excited about the opening of Angel of the Wind's today We recognize that we're still in short supply a vaccine, but our as a task force excited that we're going to have additional capacity that will be vetted that the processes will be smooth and that one more vaccine arrives will be able to get it out quickly and safely and I want to thank the city of Everett, of course, to the partnership and with that we'll turn it over to mayor Franklin.

Cassie Franklin: yeah thanks Jason good morning everyone, we have obviously a lot of good work underway here in Snohomish county, and so I want to thank our partners in Health District, the county. Thank you for your continued lead leadership, and I want to thank everyone for their hard work and coordinating and distributing that seem to our residents. I'd like to give a special thanks to every city staff from police, fire public works in our office of emergency management who's been working in partnership and help with the walkthrough of the angel wins arena earlier. This year, with the Snohomish county vaccination tax force and obviously I want to also thank the event Center team who worked to ensure that the site is ready. The sites available space central location in downtown Everett and accessibility, make it a real ideal site for this fifth vaccination distribution Center in Snohomish county. And I'm very proud to have the strong partnerships that work to support our communities with these coordinated efforts to ensure the residents, health and well being. Last year has been incredibly challenging but these vaccination sites offer hope and will continue to support our positive progress through this pandemic. We

all want to get back to seeing our extended family attending live events and simply having lunch with a friend. Getting vaccinated is a step towards that and I encourage everyone to stay informed and up to date on when you are able to get vaccinated and do so as soon as you are able. Please stay diligent stay safe and together we are going to be stronger, I want to again thank the Health District, the county and the angel of Windsor arena for making this happen, thank you and I'd like to turn it back over to Executive Somers through the Q amp a.

Dave Somers: Thank you, Ms Franklin and very happy to see Angel of the Winds starting up. Fantastic news so few questions here, Dr Spitters any concern with states like Texas and Mississippi pushing for reopening can have a spillover effect here.

Chris Spitters: Well, in concept yeah you know we don't have as much. You know, movement and trade between Mississippi and Texas and Washington and say, if that were Oregon California and Idaho so distances it protects us they're a little bit, but, yeah I mean I you know, so no I'm not deeply concerned about those particular states, but we always need to keep in mind what's going on in our region and throughout the country and. Particularly either large population centers that we have a lot of exchange with or that are just physically close. So those two states in particular don't you know put me on edge, but you know it's it speaks to the point of we do what we can locally, we can't control what happens outside of our zone of activity, but we do need to remain aware of what's going on.

Dave Somers: So next question is the ever clinic and a letter to patient says mass vaccination sites are getting priority and they anticipate limited doses for their patients is that your understanding that mass vaccination sites will cause limits at healthcare clinics for access to vaccines.

Chris Spitters: Well, that is an express policy. Item with the vaccine rollout is at the current time, to emphasize mass sites that are oriented. toward community health clinics and toward equity oriented vaccinations So those are the state's priorities, and so they ever clinic is correct in communicating that to their staff or to their to their patient population that's correct, that is a state policy. Doctors how are the keys trends, along with hospitals and deaths. CDC and department health say they're worried about plateauing of trends. Well yeah you know the declining cases is you know it's it hasn't really plateaued, but you can see on our website, if you go to our case count. tab on our on our website, you can see that you know, a we're down over 75% off of the peak when we were up at 400 almost 450 cases per hundred thousand for two weeks. We came down rapidly over the course of a few weeks to about 160 and then 140 hundred 20 110 so that the slope is starting to you know. flatten and hospitalizations likewise have flattened they haven't gone back up you know we've had any I think this morning, there are 25. People in Snohomish county hospitals with code for on ventilators and that's been stable for a couple of weeks. Cases in long term care facilities, thank goodness, have almost completely disappeared, I think, given that the. That that effort to vaccinate skilled nursing and assisted living facilities is almost complete and almost everyone in those settings has had an opportunity to have their first skills so. Overall things look good there continue to go down we've got a great opportunity here to roll out the vaccine, while we're not distracted by high you know, having to deal with high morbidity. But you know, there is a little bit of flattening and I think it's a reminder to us all that. You know this can come back on us just as quickly as it

disappeared so we've really got to buckle down, and you know we're focusing on the vaccination but all of us need to focus on those simple efforts, we can all take to interrupt transmission.

Dave Somers: Do we know why our allocation took such a big drop in are you doing the squeaky wheel to get the allocation increased again.

Chris Spitters: Well we're always the squeaky wheel we're always asking more than we get, I think, overall, the state has not been able to fill. Either Snohomish county these requests or statewide requests, you know they're usually coming in at two thirds or so of the requests. You know why we've developed from you know, being in the 20 to 30,000 dose range down into the teens I don't have a specific answer it's probably got a little bit to do with you know there, as I mentioned in my comments earlier their formula for. Distributing vaccine is not simply per capita, you know, we in that case we just get 10% every week. But sometimes they're looking at other factors as well, and so will continue to try to perform and advocate for Snohomish county providers and our mass vaccination sites to get the maximum number of doses, we can, because we know we can deliver.

Dave Somers: yeah, I'll just add on that my staff, I know the Health District is in contact with the governor's office and the State Department health daily multiple times daily, and so we. Continually express her frustration and especially as supply drive we're trying to be understanding, though the supplied to the State comes from the Federal Government so it's a supply chain. problem but we're also asking the state to try to give us more heads up currently we get a couple of days notice on what our next allocation is going to be and we're hopeful. That we can start to get some farther advanced notice, so we can do our planning, as you can imagine it's extremely difficult. To start up and close down mass vaccination sites constantly if we had better numbers, we can do better planning so again that's. The Federal Government started to give the state three weeks heads up and we're hopeful that at some point that trickles down to counties and local agency, so we get more of a heads up, but we, yes, we are squeaky. see people who got their first shot weeks ago with the Arlington sites are saying they haven't heard anything from the Health District, but also can't schedule their second shot until they get an email from the Health District what should they do is there a plan for them.

Jason Biermann: yeah, I can answer that the emails go out when we have vaccine available and so right now, if folks are waiting it's simply because we're waiting on vaccine when we have vaccine available we send out, we maintain a list of the folks who have been vaccinated and emails are sent out asking folks to To go ahead and get online and make their appointment or call the call Center and make their appointment so that's simply a function of vaccine availability at this point

Dave Somers: Is the Angel of the Wind"" site getting all 5000 J&J shots and is there any concern that teachers could flood the mass sites freezing out older folks or less apt at securing doses. Despite the work with pharmacies, I know, dozens of teachers who are checking mass sites daily what's the message to the newly eligible folks.

Chris Spitters: Well, that certainly is a concern, as I mentioned during my remarks earlier that we've now amplified the number of people eligible, but not the number of doses available so. Now, all the school districts and we're working you know, working with the private schools toward the same are connected with a. Either a pharmacy and or a clinical setting to get their staff vaccinated and you know we would encourage all school staff and teachers to orient toward their employer to find out when that clinics being held, and when they be vaccinated there's but we're also under direction if somebody signs up in one of the whether it's a clinic vaccine provider or one of the mass sites, we are under federal direction to. Provide vaccine to them as long as they're eligible, including child care and school staff, having said that my hope is that these special arrangements for the schools are emphasized, with the school staff, one for efficiency within their own domain and also to preserve system capacity for the older adults who are more likely to have severe illness get hospitalized die and cause the kind of impacts that move us backward as we're trying to open up.

Jason Biermann: And I'll just simply add if it's okay, yes, that those 5000 Johnson and Johnson doses are slated for Angel of the Winds through this weekend. And then just also adding that, as we have more vaccine, we also have the capacity to go as we did with homage To do things that are more localized we recognize the challenge that the elderly folks and others are having in getting to the mass fact sites so we're we have other strategies, when we have vaccine, that we can bring vaccine out to them.

Dave Somers: Our schools doing in terms of code cases well teachers are now able to get vaccinated students aren't is are concerned about outbreaks among students.

Chris Spitters: You know our school numbers are the best they been since we started counting. from February 19 through March for. There are 14 school facilities with one or more cases only two with two or more cases none with more than five cases. And then in childcare just for settings with cases. Three of those are two or more cases none have more than five so that's just about as good as it's been that's largely driven by what's going on in the community we're at a you know we're at a declining trajectory and decreasing level of cases and it's showing there, so you know, this is a window of opportunity for us to make a lot of progress with vaccine again without being hampered by having to also deal with a high volume of containment efforts.

Dave Somers: So long term care facility operators are saying that once the federal CVS, Walgreens and three onsite clinics are done. The turnover of staff and residents causes their percentages of those vaccinated drop pretty quickly any plan to help them 16 that so what's the long term plan for those kinds of facilities that have turnover.

Chris Spitters: at the federal level I don't know at the local level, certainly, we would you know from the. Disease Control and health officer perspective, the those employers should be encouraging those newly arriving employees to go get vaccinated through their personal health care provider, one of the mass vaccine sites in the absence of a. of a dedicated you know maintenance program, if you will, for that scope of activity. That would be what we suggest for the staff and then for the elders you know they to like the like the staff they're all want a eligible so it's just a question of getting somewhere. Most people

destined for a long term care facility come out of a hospital and I believe most or all the hospitals are vaccinating unvaccinated. elders and during or at the end of their hospitalization so you know not specifically designed program, but there are venues and mechanisms just naturally available in our existing vaccine response to address that.

Dave Somers: President Biden's goal of getting every teacher is shot by the end of the month, realistic.

Chris Spitters: seem so to me especially I really think we're fortunate in Snohomish county that the schools have been so forward thinking and that. Virtually all the school districts already have a plan so that speaks well to it, and you know if we get to the end of the month and 80 or 90% are down in with their first dose instead of 100 well. that's still pretty good, and we can mop up the rest through April so I'm feeling very optimistic about that.

Dave Somers: And then last question we have is what should someone do if they are unable to get their second shot in the recommended time is it required to get the same type or Pfizer and Moderna, for example, interchangeable right.

Chris Spitters: So current guidance from the centers for Disease Control is that only an extenuating circumstances, would you interchange vaccines like have Pfizer for dose one and we're there for those two. And although you know, the goal is to get that second dose at 21 days later, for Pfizer or 28 for Moderna. You know that can go out as far as six weeks, at least, and you know again that's the target but CDC is clear that you know, the idea is to get the same product twice and if it extends beyond six weeks, you do not need to restart the series, and you know. I would also just add that six weeks is that you know that's an appropriate goal, because that's where the data that's known from the phase three trials that's how long what's been published or recorded. In their experience about you know antibodies and cases and that sort of thing in the vaccinated population, but if you look at the relative absence of. reinfection occurring over the course of the pandemic and the high degree of protection that we at least see you know. From the first dose of vaccine, in the short run, I think it's still very important for those who are getting it to those series to get that second dose. get it as soon as possible, but also not to worry too much if it's going to comment seven weeks or. Five weeks just try to get it done as soon as possible don't worry that you need to restart and don't worry that you know, on day 43 you know after six weeks has passed that you're now become vulnerable. get it done don't. rely on just the single dose but also don't fret over the specific timing as soon as possible, within that time frame, but if it goes longer I don't think it's reason for people to have anguish or anxiety.

Dave Somers: Thank you, Doctor. Thank you, Gary. Thank you, Jason. I think that wraps us up.

Joint Information Center: This is Heather in the Joint Information Center Thank you again for joining us today and your questions are going to go ahead and wrap up, but please stay tuned for future make media availabilities