

Photos from the PDX Red Lot Vaccine Clinic

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After five months and more than 250,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses into arms, the PDX Red Lot drive-thru clinic closed for the final time on June 19, 2021.

What does it take to **operate a drive-thru vaccination site** on the edge of the Columbia River Gorge? More than five months since the PDX Red Lot vaccination site first opened on Jan. 21, staff and volunteers experienced the full range of Pacific Northwest weather.

In addition to **3,500** packets of sunscreen and **10,000** hand warmers, the operation was sustained with **1,000** rain ponchos, **3,500** instant coffee packets and more than **2,500** gallons of drinking water.



Red Cross, OHSU, and Port of Portland staff on the final day of operation.

A lot has been written about the project already:

- **[Making History: Meet the Women Who Helped Launch a Vaccine Clinic at PDX](#)**
- **[Two Mass Vaccination Sites Tally More than 800,000 Doses](#)**
- **[OHSU Steps Up to Vaccinate Oregon](#)**
- **[The Instagram Dogs of PDX Airport's Mass Vaccination Site](#)**

But, most importantly, we'd like to thank all the Port of Portland, OHSU, and Red Cross people who helped make this incredible endeavor possible. Go behind the scenes with us to explore the PDX Red Lot Vaccine Clinic in action and get insights from the Port team that made this all possible.



A giant snowstorm hit a few weeks into the operation, taking down tents. For the safety of those who might be using the site, the Port and OHSU preemptively made the decision to close operations over the weekend — a decision that proved smart, as the region was blanketed in more than a foot of snow and ice.



A Red Cross volunteer bundled up on the vaccine clinic's opening day. At times, temperatures were around 30 degrees on the opening weekend of operations.

The early cold days working in the Red Lot were REALLY cold and wet. Sheila Washington procured for us these insulated coveralls (which only came in men's sizes, not really sizing to accommodate women's hips!). Truly, I have never appreciated a piece of clothing more – nor looked like I tumbled out of a clown car in giant pants. Under these coveralls, I would layer long-johns and jeans and – finally – I wasn't freezing.

Kama Simonds



Crews set up a vaccination tent in cold, wet weather. The Port and its vendors made a number of real-time adjustments – including ordering these large tents to accommodate multiple cars at a time – to make the Red Lot vaccine clinic more and more efficient for patients.



Staff and volunteers had some protection from the rain — and later the heat — in the staff/volunteer tent. This is where they checked in for their shift and grabbed coffee, snacks, and any food donations that were made for the day.

There were lots of cold and rainy days early on. We were all cold and wet but dedicated to the “mission”. Every day was fun, even in the worst of it.

Michael Huggins



The Port of Portland's Steve Koester, Michael Huggins, and Kama Simonds are bundled up on the vaccine clinic's first day of operations.

My most memorable weather moment is when I was working as Incident Commander and Airport Duty Manager Brian Burk called me to let me know that PDX was suspending aircraft fueling because of reported lightening strikes within 5 miles of the airfield.

I gazed around at the big open expanses of space and tall tents with fabric draped over metal structures and thought, "This could be bad." Then I spent the next hour obsessively watching the dark cloud move northwest – away from the parking lot! (We had a lightning plan in place shortly thereafter.)

Kama Simonds



OHSU volunteers gather before the cars start rolling in. Volunteers arrive up to an hour before opening to get their assignments and prepare for the day.

There is not a specific day that stands out for me other than day 1. I was able to get vaccinated for my first shot. I did love seeing Port staff coming through the site. While it was very efficiently run, I was able to say hi and briefly catch up.

Michael Huggins



OHSU vaccinators gather on the last day of the Red Lot vaccine clinic. On average, around 500 volunteers were needed every day to keep the vaccine clinic running smoothly.



Vaccinators had a lot of fun on the site, often dressing up to bring a smile to patients coming through the Red Lot clinic.

My favorite memory was on a Sunday PM shift working with Nick Atwell. Everything was going smooth as silk, a well-oiled machine. We'd been directed to begin closing early and were on track for a shutdown in the neighborhood of 6:30 p.m. At approximately 6:15, a young lady from OHSU staff came to Nick and I with the concern she had lost her key fob and was unable to leave since she knew her car wouldn't start.

Unfortunately, her work area covered the entire waiting area. Short story long, Nick and I drove the entire waiting area and adjacent areas. At 7:30, with shutdown now complete and all other personnel gone, I drove her to her car for one last search on the ground around it. Next step would be call for a tow/locksmith and take her to the MAX line.

After a quick look outside, she dug around under the driver's seat and found it. Had we only STARTED our search at the car an hour earlier..... 😊

Pete Peterson



We set up the Red Lot as a drive-thru clinic to support people who might have mobility concerns — and to give those in East Multnomah County an easy option that didn't force them to drive into Portland. It was a great option for families as well, who could keep children entertained in their vehicles as they got vaccinated.



Pharmacists prepared the vaccines on site in a temperature-controlled tent that was rented. Runners would take the prepared vaccines to the vaccination tents, keeping everything fresh and ready for the vaccinators.

What's a big lesson you learned during this project?

We are family! A group of volunteers and employees from different organizations came together to deliver for the community and in doing so, built a family!

Michael Huggins



Port employees Andrew Sowders, Kama Simonds, and Michael Huggins celebrate their final day of operations.



Sheila Washington and Nora Yotsov, who played instrumental roles in coordinating the vaccine clinic for the Port, use a golf cart to support operations and get from one location to another at the large parking lot.

Is there a specific moment or day that stands out most to you?

I was working as the Incident Commander one particular morning (prior to opening) when someone from OHSU got on the radio to let us know there was a wolf pup wandering around in the third vaccine tent. It took me a second to comprehend what they were saying because “wolf” just made no sense. A WOLF in the vaccine area??

Of course what they were seeing was a coyote, which is a pretty common site at PDX. I called our Wildlife Team just to let them know and eventually the coyote made its way off the lot. I tried to get a photo hoping to be able to add it to our “Dogs of the PDX POD” Instagram page, but alas, the pup was too quick for my camera. We all spent the rest of the day waiting for the roadrunner to show up, but no such luck.

Jennifer Stacey



While we were unable to get a photo of our coyote friend at the Red Lot, a number of dogs came through the site with their families. In fact, there were so many Good Dogs that OHSU volunteers created an Instagram account to celebrate them: [@pdx_pack_immunity](#).

The Vaccine Process at the Red Lot

The Portland Tribune called the PDX Red Lot vaccine clinic a “Herculean effort” to vaccinate the community. How did we move around 5,000 cars through the clinic every day? The answer is: we learned as we went along!

As Kama Simonds shared, “The days that stand out the most to me are the ones where chaos reigned and we had – and took – the opportunity to learn and improve.”

We dealt with traffic backups (onto I-205!), appointment-scheduling snafus that kept staff there until 11:30 p.m., and computer outages that caused 3-hour waits. Each time, we learned from the problem and improved the process.

By the end, we were a well-oiled machine — getting people through before they could finish their morning coffee. Here's what their journey looked like at the Red Lot in our final weeks.

Step 1: Pull into Red Lot



As you pulled into the lot, a greeter welcomed you and directed your vehicle to a specific row to line up for step one in the process.



And sometimes, that greeter included a four-legged friend.

Step 2: Get directed to a waiting lane



We used the ferry line-up system, which directed cars all to the same row at first. That whole row would then get directed to our registration tents, which had a number of shorter rows for the vehicles to pull into.

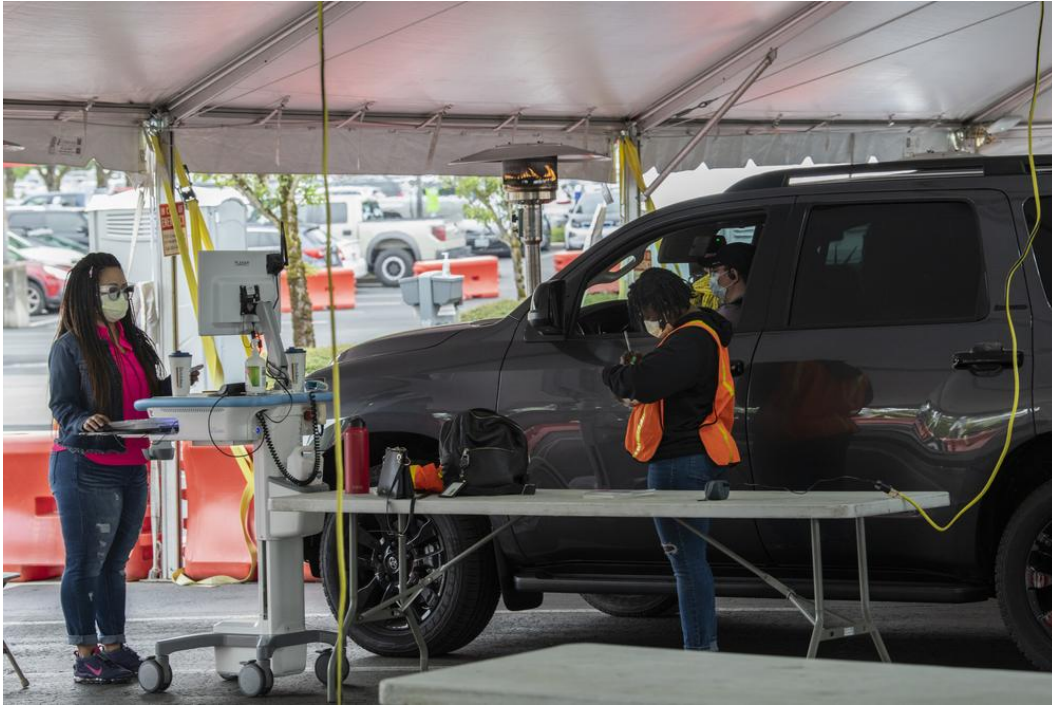


Having these different locations to park, line up, and wait meant that waiting vehicles didn't back up onto the street.

Step 3: Check-in at registration



When it was your turn, OHSU staff directed you into a tent, where they confirmed your appointment time and date and checked whether this was your first or second dose.



If this was your first vaccine appointment, OHSU staff would schedule you for your second shot on the spot. Those came four weeks after the first dose.

Step 4: Head to a vaccination tent



After you left the registration tent, you were directed by volunteers to a second set of tents to get your vaccine.



Cars would again line up in rows of six at three different vaccine tent locations. Communication could be a challenge at times, with big jets roaring overhead as they landed or took off at PDX.

Step 5: Get your vaccine



When it was your turn, you'd roll under the tent and an OHSU staff member would greet you, ask you a few questions, and quickly and painlessly administer your vaccine.



These three OHSU medical staff were all smiles on the last day of the clinic. They have been vaccinating people on-site at the PDX Red Lot since January.

Step 6: Head to the monitoring area



After getting vaccinated, you'd be directed to a monitoring area, where you would wait for either 15 or 30 minutes, depending on your previous reactions to medications and vaccines. Staff would check in with you to see how you were doing.



A lot of volunteers loved getting assigned to the monitoring area because it gave them a chance to stop and chat with the now-vaccinated people. Most people expressed their gratitude for the service and a sense of hope for the first time in a while.

Step 7: You're done!



Congrats, your work is done. You were then escorted to the exit by friendly volunteers with bubble machines and pom-poms.



If you got vaccinated at the PDX Red Lot, thanks for being one of more than 250,000 vaccine recipients on our site! And a big, big thank you to the nearly 5,500 volunteers who took time out of their day to give back in such a huge way.

Celebrating the Vaccine Clinic

It took thousands of volunteers, a lot of heart, and a ton of coordination to pull off this vaccine clinic.



Total vaccines January 21 – June 19

252,897

Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/sUoZpQHINyM>

