This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, November 3, 2026.

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The state's work on Route 116 by Chimacum Creek has not yet been completed. The highway was closed in late August to allow replacement of a culvert in Chimacum Creek to improve fish passage. It was scheduled to reopen November 1, but unfortunately the contractor encountered difficulty with the manufacture of components needed for the project. WSDOT has therefore announced that the road will continue to be closed until December 1. A signed detour route will remain in place until the project is completed. For more information, visit https://wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/search-projects/us-101-sr-116-north-olympic-peninsula-remove-fish-barriers.

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Port Townsend mayor Amy Howard has announced that the covered pavilion in the Kah Tai Lagoon Nature Park has been closed until further notice as the posts holding up the enclosure have rotted out, making it unsafe to occupy. City staff are currently considering options for repair; in the meanwhile, caution tape surrounds the structure and signs are posted declaring it to be unsafe.

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Jefferson County PUD reports that over 3500 customers in Quilcene were out of power for a little over four hours last Friday morning. Initial reports assumed a line was down on Highway 101, but crews soon discovered a damaged fuse at the Quilcene substation. The cause was discovered to be a very unfortunate bird; crews were able to replace the damaged fuse and test the transformer and re-energize customers by 12:35 that afternoon.

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In related news, on Saturday the Brinnon fire department worked with Mason County PUD to deal with power lines that had been downed at the intersection of Kelly and Duckabush Roads. Because a truck and an RV trailer were entangled in the lines, the lines needed to be secured and de-energized before the vehicles could be safely moved. Duckabush Road was kept open, but Kelly Road was closed at the west entrance for several hours while the scene was made safe.

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An incident of vandalism has occurred at Irondale County Park, where paint caused around $15,000 in damages to the sports court and bathrooms. The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office is seeking information that could help them apprehend the culprits: if you can provide any details, please contact Deputy Brian Peterson at bpeterson@co.jefferson.wa.us or call dispatch at 360-344-9779.

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Meanwhile, information about conditions at the Port Townsend Paper Mill continues to emerge. A recent story on Seattle's KUOW radio station noted that a tank holding a caustic liquid called black liquor imploded at the mill in 2019 in a process similar to the implosion that killed 11 workers at the Nippon Dynawave Paper Mill in Longview in May of this year. The Port Townsend Mill's tank was being drained at the time it imploded but caused no spill or injuries. Spokespeople for the mill said it was investigating the incident, which occurred

before the current management, Atlas Holdings, bought the mill in 2022. Atlas Holdings is a Connecticut-based private equity firm with a reported $26 billion in yearly revenue.

Over the past year, the Port Townsend mill has had spills of wastewater, pulp sludge, and oil, leading to investigations and fines currently totaling $918,500. Washington State Labor and Industries is now investigating chemical use and storage at all three Washington mills that use white liquor, as well as at another seven pulp mills that use different chemicals.

The Port Townsend Mill's public relations firm reports that the mill has replaced three of its smaller liquor tanks since the Longview incident, but that the main white liquor tank which was inspected externally in July is not scheduled for internal inspection until next year. In the meantime, state legislators are looking to start regulating above ground chemical tanks.

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And finally, Port Townsend City Hall and the Port Townsend Library will be closed today for staff training. Note also that today is election day. Today is election day, and your ballots must be returned by 8 pm. If you need to mail your ballot in, be sure to have a post office employee stamp your envelope with today's date before you mail it off: we sincerely want your vote to count!

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KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at noon and 5pm. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Diane Walker; thank you for listening and stay tuned for election results.