

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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National Guard Increases Number of Tests Being Done for COVID-19

The Nebraska National Guard held a testing event last week in McCook hosted by Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) that screened 102 people for COVID-19. All test results from this event were negative. Individuals from the nine counties in the health district were contacted and given an appointment based on their level of risk. Three levels of risk were prioritized: persons with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 who were not seen by a provider for testing, persons with travel history within the past 14 days to an area of high transmission (aka hotspot), and high risk healthcare workers and first responders. An additional testing in North Platte hosted by West Central District Health Department screened 6 people from the SWNPHD health district.

Mass testing is an important strategy to help identify hidden cases. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), data has shown that 25% of all cases of COVID-19 are asymptomatic, meaning they do not show any symptoms. Asymptomatic carriers may be spreading the disease without knowing it, which is also why wearing a mask in public is important to protect the people around you.

While no cases of COVID-19 were discovered during this event, three other cases were identified through medical provider testing. COVID-19 testing is being done daily at area clinics and hospitals. The following 3 positive cases have been identified:

- Case 1 – a male in his thirties in Red Willow County, by community transmission.
- Case 2 – a male in his twenties in Furnas County, related to travel outside the health district.
- Case 3 – a male in his twenties in Furnas County, by direct contact with Case 2.

Community transmission is when someone has COVID-19 and public health officials are unable to identify how or where the individual became infected.

Direct contact is when someone has been around a person with confirmed COVID-19 for longer than ten minutes and within 6 feet or less. Being at a local grocery store at the same time while shopping with someone who may be infected would **not** be considered direct contact.

If you have been in direct contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, talk to your healthcare provider about the possibility of being tested. This is also recommended for anyone who is experiencing any of the following symptoms: fever, sudden onset of cough and/or shortness of breath, fatigue, and sore throat.

This virus is spreading in the community through person to person spread, and now is the time to use extra caution. Please limit your contact with people who live outside of your home. Maintain social distancing when you are out and about, and make sure to keep 6 feet apart from others. Wear a mask in public. Use hand sanitizer after public contact, and then wash your hands immediately after returning home.

DHHS has a statewide coronavirus (COVID-19) information line to help answer general questions and share the latest information and resources with Nebraskans to help keep them informed. The number is (402) 552-6645; hours of operation are 8 a.m.-8 p.m. CST, 7 days a week.

For more information on COVID-19 in southwest Nebraska, visit swhealth.ne.gov. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook and Twitter. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th St (1 block north of Arby's) in McCook or at 501 Broadway in Imperial (5th St. entrance); 308-345-4223.



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