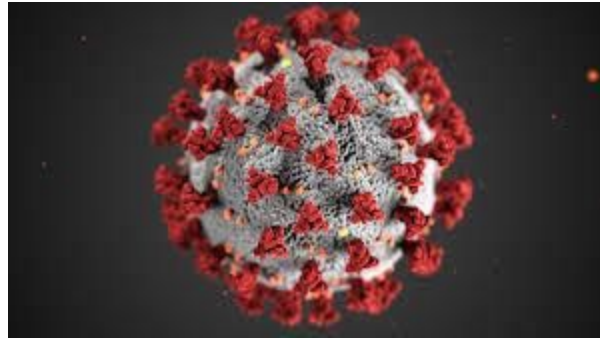


Updated: County's coronavirus total more than triples to 13 since Friday

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The number of confirmed cases of the COVID-19 coronavirus in Del Norte County has tripled since Friday.

Del Norte Emergency Services Manager Kymmie Scott said the county's public health department has identified two clusters of infection, bringing the total to 13. Four cases were identified over the weekend and another four on Monday. Scott said they don't know if there is an association yet between the two clusters. A 13th case was added to the Del Norte County Health Department's website this afternoon.

"Most of folks on there, outside initial presenters, we found through aggressive contact tracing," Scott said. "There have been no hospitalizations. They are all either asymptomatic or at home recovering."

Tuesday, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation confirmed a Pelican Bay State Prison employee has tested positive for COVID-19.

County public health staff have included the PBSP employee as part of their aggressive contact tracing in the wake of the other 12 cases. As of Tuesday afternoon, Scott did not know if the prison employee was one of the four positive cases identified in Del Norte County on Monday.

As of 9 a.m. Tuesday, according to the Del Norte County Public Health website, 632 total COVID-19 tests have been administered, with 598 negative cases and 13 positive cases. There are still 21 pending test results and four patients considered recovered.

Public Health Officer Dr. Warren Rehwaltd told the Crescent City Council at its regular meeting Monday the increase in cases has partially to do with Public Health staff urging people to get tested. He also urged residents not to be too alarmed by the significant jump in positive cases.

“Some of this is just disease showing up at our border. Some of it is sending people to get tested,” Rehwaldt said. “People should expect to see more of it. There will be more cases.”

On Friday, the state health officer granted Del Norte County a variance to move more quickly into Phase 2 opening of businesses. In response, Rehwaldt issued a public health order that outlines steps businesses and the public should take to mitigate spreading the coronavirus. Scott said the top priority is mandatory masking in certain situations.

“The mandatory masking is for public, enclosed spaces,” Scott said. “We are also asking people if have traveled to adjacent counties beyond Curry or Humboldt, we’d like you to self quarantine at home for 14 days after you come back.”

She added the self quarantine does not apply to adjacent counties because the health department concedes the amount movement between the counties of working people.

“We’re encouraging people to be flexible. We’ve heard people are anxious and stir crazy (during the lockdown), but the threat is still there,” Scott said. “It’s still important to follow the rules for masking, washing your hands, and staying six feet apart.”

According to the state’s criteria for granting the variance, Del Norte County could not to have more than two positive COVID-19 cases within 14 days. Scott said it’s unclear what the disease threshold is for rescinding that variance.

“We haven’t had time to digest that portion of the pie yet,” Scott said.

In good news, Scott said Del Norte County has been authorized to receive a state sponsored testing site like the one in Humboldt county towards the end of the month. This would allow individuals to get a test on their own to see if they’ve been exposed to the coronavirus.

“We’re trying to get the site sooner. We know people want to get testing. We know they’ve had a difficult time getting tests since this started,” Scott said.

She added anyone who does get a test, while awaiting results, jot down any contacts with anyone they’ve had in the previous two weeks, whether in public at a store or with family.

“That way if tests do come back positive, that information can get back to the tracing team, to facilitate being able to do their work more quickly,” Scott said.

Scott said the county is also working with the state to bring in masks for businesses.

“We’ve heard on social media chatter that some people are having a hard time getting supplies. We’re working to get masks to employees and the public if they don’t have their own,” she said.

As for the type of masks, Scott recommends a safe covering of some sort, particularly cloth masks for businesses that can be washed and reused.

“The main thing for these types of masks, they prevent you from transmitting anything to other people,” she said.

She added to leave ordering the N95 masks, which are more expensive and harder to come by, for medical professionals and emergency responders.

Scott said she’s also heard on social media problems people in the public with asthma are having wearing masks. She pointed to a couple options for them. The first is face shields like she’s seen some checkers at stores are wearing, which help prevent the spread of droplets. The other option is to sign up with a group the county has partnered with - Neighbors Together for Good - which provides volunteers to do the shopping for the more vulnerable population. To learn more about the organization, go to www.TrueNorthOrganizing.org/covid19 or call (707) 948-6999.