



NEWS RELEASE

Michelle Pemberton
Public Information Officer
(970) 522-3741 x1239
michellep@nchd.org

April 9, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Increasing COVID-19 Cases in Northeast Colorado

Sterling, Colo. – April 9, 2020: In recent days there has been a sudden increase in the number of positive COVID-19 cases reported to the Northeast Colorado Health Department (NCHD), especially for Morgan County. NCHD in collaboration with Morgan County Emergency Management, want to stress to everyone that the number of positive cases doesn't necessarily reflect that Morgan County's rate of infection is any higher than neighboring counties. There are several factors to consider when viewing the numbers of positive COVID-19 cases on NCHD's website. First, the population size of each county and community must be considered. The larger the population, the increased likelihood of exposure. Morgan County has one of the largest populations of our six county district. Second, testing resources are not equal at all facilities across northeast Colorado. While there are testing guidelines available, each facility may be testing different categories of people based on varying circumstances and availability of testing supplies.

Additionally, spikes in reported cases can be the result of the testing procedures themselves. Currently, some tests are being sent to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) lab while others are being tested by private labs

where several results may be held and sent at one time. As a result, numbers could jump significantly in one day and then remain fixed for several consecutive days. In some cases, challenges with data entry and delays in getting the data released to CDPHE can also result in significant daily jumps. NCHD is working with local facilities and CDPHE to ensure there are no duplicated case entries.

While this may explain the jump in numbers and possibly alleviate community fears, we want to remind everyone that the actual numbers of those who have COVID-19 in northeast Colorado are most likely much higher than test results show, especially in our larger populations. It is estimated that for every positive COVID-19 test result there are an additional 4-10 individuals who have it but have not been tested. Not everyone can or will be tested. Of those that have been tested and found positive, NCHD is doing ongoing contact investigations and we are seeing community transmission where a single point of exposure cannot be identified. Common community exposures may include family gatherings, workplaces, retail stores or other community locations.

In addition to individual investigations, NCHD has been working with local businesses to educate them on best practices for safety of employees. Critical businesses are following stringent guidelines and NCHD is providing technical assistance and guidance.

NCHD wants to remind everyone that it is important to continue to comply with the stay-at-home public health order to limit exposures. If you do need to leave your home to conduct necessary business such as grocery shopping, please consider going at a time of day that might not have high traffic, wear a mask to protect yourself and limit the number of members of your household that go out.

Another reminder to anyone who is sick, please remember that the public health order requires you to stay home and self-isolate. Do not go to work or to the store or any other public places. Send someone to the store for your necessary supplies, have

them leave it by your door and then leave. When they have left, you may get your supplies.

Up to this point, the majority of the positive COVID-19 cases in northeast Colorado have not required hospitalization but have been able to recover in isolation at their home. Recovery time can vary and many have recovered. Recovery is defined as being out of isolation and having no symptoms for 72 hours. However, NCHD, CDPHE and other healthcare organizations have no way to track exact numbers of those who are currently self-isolated and recovering at home versus those who have already recovered.

NCHD wants to encourage everyone to do their part to slow the spread of this virus and stay home. For more information, please visit the NCHD website at

<https://www.nchd.org/co>.

#