

Contact: Public Information Officer, 805-212-9484

June 29, 2020

COVID-19 Outbreak in Farmworker Community in Oxnard

Oxnard, CA – The Ventura County Public Health Department has responded to a COVID-19 outbreak at a farmworker housing facility in Oxnard. All residents of the facility are being tested. Currently, there are 95 positive cases with approximately 100 tests pending at the Ventura County Public Health Lab. The residents are in their 20s and 30s and currently have mild symptoms. They are being placed under quarantine or isolation depending on their test results.

Persons who have tested positive are remaining in place under quarantine. The Public Health Department in partnership with the Ventura County Health Care Agency's Backpack Medicine Team are providing assistance and guidance for residents of the facility.

“Our team responded immediately once we learned of this outbreak. We will continue to assist those who have tested positive and those who have been exposed. We urge everyone in Ventura County, ranging from individuals and families, to business operators and community leaders to help us stop the increasing trend of community transmission of COVID-19,” said Public Health Director Rigo Vargas.

The Public Health Department recommends the following measures to prevent exposure:

- Stay home when possible. Gatherings are still prohibited in the State.
- Remain six feet away from others and wear a facial covering when engaging in tasks away from home.
- Wash your hands with soap and water regularly.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick. Do not go to work or other places.

Additionally, all local employers are urged to adhere closely to sector health and safety guidelines. Ensuring a safe environment for both employees and customers is critical to slowing the spread of COVID-19 and assuring that businesses remain safely open during this time.

“Please use extreme caution as COVID-19 is still prevalent in our County. You are much more likely to run into someone who has no symptoms but is positive if you gather with others. It is best to stay home as much as possible at this time and to follow all prevention protocols in the workplace,” said Public Health Officer Doctor Robert Levin.

In April, the County of Ventura, in collaboration with the County Executive Office, the Farmworker Resource Program, Farm Bureau of Ventura County, Ventura County Agricultural Association, many local growers

and the Agricultural Commissioner's Office, issued an [Advisory](#) for Agricultural Worker Protection to be used during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Advisory provided information for employee hygiene emphasizing hand washing, staying home when sick and social distancing to avoid the spreading of illness during work activities and breaks. The advisory also provided guidance for employers to have soap or disinfectant, potable water and single-use disposable towels available at worksites and throughout facilities. Instruction for routine environmental cleaning in high traffic areas, training and limiting nonessential visits and travel were included in the advisory.

The Agricultural Commissioner's Office also issued 1,000,000 masks to agricultural sites throughout the County. These measures have helped to protect farmworkers. Up to this point, farmworkers have made up an average of 2% of the total positive cases in Ventura County with approximately 50 cases among farmworkers countywide. The Public Health team responds when there is any report of an outbreak to a facility. Testing is provided and contact tracing begins so that those who may have been exposed to a positive case are alerted and provided with guidance for self-quarantine. This immediate response has helped to limit additional spread.

In addition to the Advisory, mask distribution and site visits there has been on-going multilingual educational outreach. This includes resource information with 43,000 Farmworker paychecks, WhatsApp messaging, videos in multiple languages, social media messaging in partnership with community partners, public service announcements on multiple radio stations, print ads, outreach at local businesses, churches and schools, digital sign board messaging and bilingual tele-town halls.

The County's Backpack Medicine Team has provided medical outreach where physicians visit the farms to answer questions, test and provide prevention information. In addition to this outreach, the County funded expanded evening hours for Food Share pop-up sites allowing for more accessibility to food and a rental assistance program was launched to provide funding for those who cannot afford to pay rent due to COVID-19 impacts.

All County of Ventura health care clinics have waived fees for any COVID-19 related testing or treatment during the response efforts. The clinics have also provided expanded multi-lingual tele-health efforts to answer questions and provide guidance. Drive through testing sites were launched in Oxnard, Moorpark, Ventura and Santa Paula offering no cost COVID-19 testing for all community members. The testing is offered during later evening hours at all sites and on weekends at the Oxnard site.

The County's Farmworker Resource Program coordinators serve the agricultural community throughout the year. They have been conducting regular outreach throughout the pandemic in facilitating prompt resolutions to workplace concerns such as payroll issues and working conditions, navigating services available from public agencies, and leveraging existing resources. The program is staffed by trilingual employees who speak indigenous languages like Mixteco and are knowledgeable about the agricultural industry and serve as outreach resources to farmworkers and their employers. During the pandemic the program coordinators launched a donation campaign for farmworkers in partnership with local businesses and community members. The effort has provided much needed resources for those in need.

Please stay informed about COVID-19 information in the County of Ventura at www.venturacountyrecovers.org.
