



South Central Public Health District
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NEWS RELEASE--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: May 22, 2020

Jump in Confirmed Cases in Local Food Processing Plant

JEROME COUNTY– At least 30 people have tested positive for COVID-19, all within one cluster in Jerome County. This jump in cases is the result of increased testing, and will mark one of the largest jumps the region has seen in several weeks. Because employees of this facility work in surrounding counties, there will be an increase in those counties as well.

“Some organizations are now offering the opportunity for companies with a cluster of cases to test their entire employee base. We welcome the opportunity to get a better picture of the spread of this virus in our region,” said Melody Bowyer, South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) Director.

As cluster testing increases in the region, SCPHD expects to see a focus on employees of food processing plants. “We are in an area where agriculture is the dominant industry and food processing plants are a huge part of that,” said Logan Hudson, SCPHD Public Health Division Administrator. “The nature of some of these jobs require people to work closely together, making social distancing difficult. Respiratory viruses, like COVID-19, are in the perfect environment to spread rapidly.”

SCPHD continues to urge companies to be flexible with their leave policies and encourage sick employees to stay home. In situations where a cluster of cases has been identified, SCPHD has recommended facilities screen employees for illness, instruct employees to stay home when sick, and implement social distancing measures if they haven't already.

Up to this point, contacts within COVID-19 investigations have been very willing to do what they can to help prevent the spread of this disease. However, investigators

are seeing more resistance within the community and urge people to take this disease seriously, and do what they can to prevent and slow the spread.

Every resident can protect the community's health and their own health by:

- Keeping six feet between themselves and people outside their household
- Washing their hands well and regularly, especially immediately after returning home
- Following the Governor's Rebound Idaho program- which includes avoiding gatherings with more than 10 people until stage 4
- Wearing a mask when they interact with people outside their home, especially in public areas like grocery stores

South Central Public Health District is running two hotlines for information about COVID-19. One in English at (208) 737-1138, and one in Spanish, at (208) 737-5965. These hotlines are currently running from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Please refer to <https://phd5.idaho.gov/coronavirus> for the latest local numbers and guidance. Refer to <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/> for Idaho-specific information and <https://rebound.idaho.gov/> for guidance.