



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TO: Media Partners
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REGARDING: Long-term Care Facility Testing
CONTACT: Kate Beer, Health Officer, (906) 487-5545

Collaboration to Expand COVID-19 Surveillance Testing

Hancock & Wakefield, MI –The Western Upper Peninsula Health Department (WUPHD) is expecting to report out increased COVID-19 testing numbers over the next few days. The increase is due to a collaborative effort between the WUPHD, Michigan's State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) and the Michigan National Guard (MING) to increase surveillance testing in the area.

Area long-term care facilities, including the Lighthouse in Hubbell, Canal View in Hancock, and the Gogebic County Medical Care Facility in Wakefield, have volunteered to be a part of the project. The SEOC is transporting test kits and the MING is assisting with the testing of any staff that choose to participate. Facility staff will be conducting testing on residents that choose to be tested.

"The increased surveillance will inform our understanding of the status of the virus in our region," said Kate Beer, Health Officer for the WUPHD. "We are appreciative of the time and effort that the Michigan State Police and the Michigan National Guard have put into this project and the collaborative response from the facilities that volunteered."

The MING medical specialists assisting with testing this week have all tested negative for the virus and are a separate team than those that tested at the local Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) facilities last week. Results from the Baraga Maximum Security Facility revealed no positive test results. When not on mission, all members of the Michigan National Guard have been self-isolating and adhering to Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance to ensure health and safety. The project is expected to be completed by Wednesday of next week.

“The Michigan National Guard has more than 500 members who reside in the Upper Peninsula, so this mission is about validating the information needed to ensure our neighbors and communities in the U.P. remain safe,” said Maj. Gen. Paul Rogers, Adjutant General and Director of the Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. “The men and women of the Michigan National Guard are technical experts and true professionals; we are proud to respond to this request for support.”

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

Prevention steps include:

- Clean your hands often. Scrub with soap for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer if you cannot wash.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick. Call ahead before going to your healthcare provider. Learn what to do if you are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Wear a mask while in spaces occupied by the public.

WUPHD is working to coordinate their response with community partners. A local COVID-19 informational call line is available Monday through Friday, from 8 AM EST to 4 PM EST at (906) 487-5545. Updates are also available at www.wuphd.org.

There is a State informational hotline available from 8 AM EST to 5 PM EST seven days per week. That number is 1-888-535-6136. Additional information on COVID-19 can be found on the MDHHS website (www.michigan.gov/coronavirus), or the CDC website (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>).

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