**News Release**
March 18, 2021

# State announces temporary East Range COVID-19 testing event in Aurora

## St. Louis County pop-up will offer no-cost saliva testing

Today the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) announced a new temporary COVID-19 testing event at the Aurora Community Center. Testing at the East Range event will occur Monday, March 22 through Tuesday, March 23 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Walk-ins are welcome and no insurance is required. Appointments are encouraged.

"Testing is a key component of our strategy to protect Minnesotans from COVID-19," said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Jan Malcolm. "Through a robust, collaborative statewide testing program, we have made great progress in removing obstacles to testing. When combined with social distancing, masking, avoiding crowds and staying home when sick, testing can help us slow the spread of COVID-19 while we work tirelessly to get as many Minnesotans as we can vaccinated."

"Our COVID-19 testing strategy has been data-driven since day one with the goal of offering low-barrier testing for every Minnesotan who needs it," said Dan Huff, MDH assistant commissioner for health protection. "The sooner we identify positive cases, the sooner infected individuals can take steps to isolate and stop the spread of the virus. We are increasingly concerned about dramatic increases in cases, particularly in St. Louis County. Right now Aurora is at the heart of this COVID-19 hotspot, which is spreading to neighboring counties. It is essential folks on the East Range have access to easy and no-cost testing."

"Taking the whole family to get tested is essential to combating this outbreak," Assistant Commissioner Huff continued. "It's vital that kids get tested every two weeks and student athletes get a test every week as well as three days before games."

As with all the state's community testing sites, testing at the Aurora event is offered at no cost. Participants will be asked for their health insurance information so the state can bill their insurance company on their behalf. If a person is uninsured or if insurance doesn't cover some or all of the cost, the state will cover the difference so testing remains open to all at no cost.

The Aurora event is a coordinated effort between the State of Minnesota, St. Louis County, Aurora Community Center and Vault Health.

"COVID-19 testing at this time of heightened concern, is incredibly important to the health of our fellow residents and to maintaining public confidence in the safety of our local businesses," said Doug Gregor, Mayor, City of Aurora. "It is a wonderful way to demonstrate our community spirit and concern for our neighbors."

"Getting tested is a way for community members to help keep COVID-19 from spreading, and getting tested is a way of showing support for our local business so they can remain open," said Jim Weikum, Mayor, City of Biwabik.

“With the pandemic winding down, we need to stay focused on wearing masks, social distancing and washing our hands,” said Chris Vreeland, Mayor, City of Hoyt Lakes. “Let’s make sure we don’t have another spike so we can have a normal summer.”

“As a community leader I believe it is important to be tested. As we move forward and have the opportunity to heal as a community and country, getting tested will aid in this healing,” said Jon Skelton, Chairman of the Board, Town of White. “It will identify COVID-19 in individuals that may not know they have it, and will likely prevent the further spreading. This ultimately will aid in getting back to a normal life.”

“We are seeing a concerning spread of COVID-19 cases in the East Range area and are thankful that the state is offering this free and convenient testing opportunity,” said Amy Westbrook, St. Louis County Public Health Division Director. “We are all so anxious to return to normal activities, and testing is still an important tool in our tool box to help us move in that direction. We want to do everything possible to prevent spread to more vulnerable people in the community.”

“Taking advantage of this testing event can assist in identifying current infections and limiting its spread in our community,” said Lance Johnson, President, Aurora Chamber of Commerce President. “Limiting the spread is critical in allowing our school and local businesses to remain open.”

“We want our students in school, workers at work, and businesses serving their customers,” said Ben DeNucci, Owner, East Range Market. “Testing is an important part of the way we can keep our friends, families, and neighbors healthy in our communities.”

Testing is open to anyone who believes they need a COVID-19 test, with or without insurance. State guidance on who should get tested was recently updated and can be found on the Minnesota COVID-19 Response webpage, Who Should Get Tested?.

Those who arrive for a test should avoid eating, drinking, chewing, or smoking anything for at least 30 minutes before providing a sample. Once they arrive at the location, they will self-administer the test by salivating into a funnel attached to a small tube. Clinic staff will be available on-site to monitor the collection process.

While walk-ins are welcome, people seeking testing at the Aurora event can schedule a test online through Vault Health. Tests will be processed in Minnesota at the saliva lab in Oakdale run by Vault Health and Infinity Biologix (IBX). Results will be provided via email in approximately 48-72 hours.

**Testing site location:**
Aurora Community Center

15 W 1st Ave N
Aurora, MN 55705

**Hours of operation:**
Monday, March 22 – Tuesday, March 23
10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

The state also offers at-home COVID-19 saliva testing for everyone who lives in Minnesota, with or without symptoms, at no cost. To learn more and order a test, visit COVID-19 Test at Home.

Minnesotans are strongly encouraged to sign up for the Minnesota COVID-19 Vaccine Connector to learn when, where, and how to get a vaccine or call 833-431-2053.

Minnesotans are also encouraged to dearch for local providers on the state's vaccine finder map.

**-MDH-**

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**Minnesota Helpline:**

For questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, call 651-297-1304 or 1-800-657-3504.

Mental Health Crisis Line - Call: **CRISIS (**274747)

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