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More testing, fewer closures: State launches proactive testing, contact tracing agreement for essential businesses

Businesses conducting 100% percent employee testing will not be considered for closure

In an effort to increase proactive COVID-19 testing of New Mexico's workforce and avoid additional temporary restrictions on essential businesses, the New Mexico Departments of Health and Environment have implemented a voluntary surveillance testing and contact tracing agreement to enable businesses to prevent mandatory 14-day closures triggered by state rapid responses to COVID-19 cases.

The agreement requires essential businesses to conduct regular COVID-19 testing among staff, as well as assist the Department of Health in contact tracing efforts. If positive cases are discovered as a result of this testing, the resulting rapid response will not count toward the mandatory 14-day closure requirement in the current public health order.

"We're empowering businesses to stay open by contributing to critical public health efforts," said Environment Department Cabinet Secretary James Kenney. "By incentivizing businesses to participate in a regular surveillance testing program, we are keeping New Mexicans safe, slowing the spread of COVID-19, and preventing additional closures of essential businesses."

"Proactive testing is an essential tool in combating the spread of this virus," said Department of Health Acting Secretary Billy Jimenez. "Partners in the private sector through these agreements will make a significant and positive impact in curbing COVID-19 in New Mexico."

To participate in the program, a business must submit to both departments a plan that details surveillance testing and contact tracing efforts the establishment will undertake at a business location. A plan must be submitted for each business location.

The agreements not only allow essential businesses to avoid a 14-day mandatory closure, it also clears a path for businesses currently closed to be allowed to reopen before the 14-day period is over.

Rapid response data will still be counted toward inclusion on the Environment Department's Rapid Response COVID-19 Watchlist and included in the daily rapid response data posted at https://www.env.nm.gov/rapid-response-data/.

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