COVID-19 Testing Set for Beach Area after Additional Cases Identified

SMYRNA (June 28, 2020) – For the second time in just over a week, the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) is asking people in the Delaware beach area, particularly in Rehoboth and Dewey Beach, to get tested for COVID-19. The recommendation comes after testing in Rehoboth Beach on Thursday identified approximately 100 persons as positive for the disease, and testing in Dewey on Friday identified another dozen persons as positive. DPH has begun making contact with the positive cases and their contacts and is providing guidance on how to safely self-isolate or self-quarantine. DPH is investigating potential additional cases in the beach area as well.

To provide easier access to those in the beach area who wish to get tested, a community-based testing event has been scheduled for Monday June 29, 2020, at the Starboard restaurant in Dewey beach from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Pre-registration for this site is full, though a limited number of walk up spots are available. A second community testing event is scheduled for Thursday, July 2, 2020, at the Epworth United Methodist Church, 19285 Holland Glade Road, Rehoboth Beach from 10:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Additional community testing sites in the beach area are likely to be scheduled in the next week or so. Registration is open at http://delaware.curativeinc.com. Testing is highly encouraged for:

- those living in the beach area with people who are not part of your family;
- those attending parties, or restaurants/bars in the last two weeks where you were not wearing a face covering or social distancing;
- people working in the restaurant, hotel or retail industry who have frequent contact with other people.

Beebe Healthcare is also partnering with the Delaware Restaurant Association (DRA) to offer testing on Monday and Tuesday to staff of any food establishment in or near the beach area. Testing is scheduled for Monday, June 29, 2020, from noon to 2 p.m. at Big Fish Grill, 20298 Coastal Highway, Rehoboth Beach. Testing will also be held on Tuesday, June 30, 2020, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Touch of Italy in Rehoboth Beach at 19724 Coastal Hwy. No pre-registration is required. Anyone with questions can call 302-738-2545.

Information about testing events statewide, including community testing sites and free-standing sites operated by the health care systems and hospitals, is listed on the testing section of the Delaware coronavirus website at: https://coronavirus.delaware.gov/testing/.

“We are extremely concerned by yet another cluster of COVID-19 cases in the beach area and the potential for spread to others both at work and in social gatherings,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “We know that some of the positive persons have been at parties recently, potentially transmitting the virus to others who may still be here or may have returned to their homes in other counties or states. We are also concerned by our own staff observations in the beach area and pictures seen on social media of people not wearing face coverings or social distancing while they are out and about, including at bars and restaurants. Make no mistake, continuing this behavior is a recipe for disaster. It is a sure way for us to end up with widespread infection that ultimately may not be contained to the beach area.” Dr. Rattay indicated that the risk for widespread infection, hospitalization and even death is higher when people spend more time, close together (not social distancing), in an indoor setting such as a restaurant or bar, where they are not using face coverings.

DPH asks anyone who observes either lack of social distancing or lack of use of face coverings by patrons or staff at businesses to report it to HSPContact@delaware.gov. All complaints are anonymous. Last week, DPH announced a partnership with the Division of Small Business in which DPH’s Health Systems Protection (HSP) section will begin enforcing violations of the state’s reopening requirements in Delaware businesses. While collaboration and education for non-compliance is the preferred action in most cases, HSP will have a broad array of enforcement actions available to it, including business closures as warranted. Some restaurants and bars have chosen to close, limit hours, or limit services based on concerns over the spread of infection in the beach community, and DPH appreciates, supports and encourages any prevention measures businesses they may implement.

“We truly need the public’s cooperation to report when they see persons at businesses not wearing face coverings or social distancing as required,” said DPH Medical Director Dr. Rick Hong. “Every individual has the opportunity to play an important role in our statewide infection control efforts by telling us when they see something wrong. Additionally, we need the assistance of all COVID-19 positive persons to identify the people they have been in close contact with so that those doing contact tracing on behalf of DPH can reach out and give your close contacts guidance on how to safely quarantine. In order to control the further spread of potential infection, we need everyone who is confirmed to have COVID-19 and those who may have been exposed to voluntarily self-isolate and self-quarantine.”

If you are sick with any of the following symptoms, stay home: fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue, chills, shaking with chills, loss of smell or taste. Other symptoms such as headache or digestive symptoms (vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain or lack of appetite) have been identified as potential symptoms related to COVID-19 and may prompt further screening, action or investigation. If you are sick and need essential supplies, ask someone else to go to the grocery store or the pharmacy to get what you need.

If you believe you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, or have symptoms of illness, make sure to distance yourself from others, particularly vulnerable populations. Older adults and people of any age with serious underlying medical conditions – including serious heart conditions, chronic lung conditions, including moderate to severe asthma, severe obesity and those who are immunocompromised, including through cancer treatment – may have a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Individuals who have complaints about individuals violating public gathering restrictions should contact state or local law enforcement. Concerns that a business may be violating operating restrictions should be directed to: HSPContact@delaware.gov. Questions related to business reopenings or operations as businesses reopen should go to COVID19FAQ@delaware.gov.

Individuals with questions about COVID-19 should call Delaware 2-1-1, individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can text their ZIP code to 898-211, or email delaware211@uwde.org. Hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Friday; 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Medically related questions regarding testing, symptoms, and health-related guidance can be submitted by email at DPHCall@delaware.gov. Questions regarding unemployment claims should be emailed to: UIClaims@delaware.gov.

In addition, the Division of Public Health asks any Delaware health care, long-term care, residential, or other high-risk facility with questions or concerns to email: DPH_PAC@delaware.gov or call the DPH Call Center at 1-866-408-1899 and press ext. 2.

DPH will continue to update the public as more information becomes available. For the latest on Delaware’s response, go to https://de.gov/coronavirus.

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