Michigan National Guard to aid Michigan Department of Corrections with COVID-19 testing

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LANSING, MICH. Beginning Monday at the Baraga Correctional Facility, medical specialists from the Michigan National Guard will assist Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) staff in testing every prisoner at the facility. The guard members will then move east across the U.P. with the goal of testing one facility each day.

“The medical professionals of the Michigan National Guard are proud to assist with COVID-19 testing in the Upper Peninsula,” said Maj. Gen. Paul Rogers, adjutant general and director of the Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. “We are community members and neighbors, and we always ready to assist in the fight against COVID-19.”

After Baraga, the facilities being tested include Alger Correctional Facility, Marquette Branch Prison, Newberry Correctional Facility, Chippewa Correctional Facility and Kinross Correctional Facility. All prisoners will be tested, totaling about 7,500 prisoners.

“We are very grateful for the support from the National Guard in this effort to continue our testing of prisoners across the state,” said MDOC Director Heidi Washington. “Their assistance will allow us to accelerate our plans for testing our population, which will help us keep our staff, prisoners and the public safe.”

The majority of the soldiers working on this project are residents of the U.P. MDOC employees who are active members of the Guard at these facilities will also assist in the process.

There will be 15, three-person teams of Michigan National Guard members working with MDOC custody and non-custody staff to complete the testing. Medical specialists from the Michigan National Guard will be in each team and will handle sample collections from the prisoners.

Once samples are collected from each facility, the MDOC will transport them to a lab for testing. Results should be known in about 48 hours.

“The clinicians, staff and patients of War Memorial Hospital appreciate the effort to fully test and identify the prevalence of the COVID-19 virus at Kinross Correctional Facility and other prisons in the UP,” said David Jahn, president and CEO, War Memorial Hospital, Sault Ste Marie. “As a CEO who could be calling upon my staff to care for very sick infectious disease patients, I need to have as much information as possible to be prepared for a surge.”.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at **Michigan.gov/Coronavirus** and **CDC.gov/Coronavirus**.

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