

Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs News Release



October 12, 2020

Walla Walla: Today, we received confirmation that an employee at the Walla Walla Veterans Home, was diagnosed with COVID-19, the employee is self-isolated at home.

The employee was originally identified as part of the weekly staff testing required by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, using a Point of Care Rapid Test with a machine produced by BD Veritor. The employee was asymptomatic, but received a positive result using this machine. When a Point of Care Rapid Test is used on an individual who does not have symptoms, there may be a 60% false positive rate with the testing. Because of the high rate of false positives, the employee was re-swabbed and a PCR test was sent to a local lab.

While waiting for confirmation of the positive test, the Walla Walla Veterans Home proceeded with all regular precautions for any positive staff or resident, including testing of residents in the house where the employee last worked, isolating the employee at home, and performing additional environmental cleaning.

We are working closely with the Walla Walla County Department of Community Health and following guidance from the CDC, CMS and our State Department of Health to ensure we are taking every possible precaution.

The Walla Walla Veterans Home will continue enhanced surveillance, including 4-hour symptom and temperature checks, for residents in the affected areas for the next 14 days. In addition, we are testing residents in affected areas and will test proactively every 3-7 days until 14 days have passed since the last positive result. We will also follow any additional guidance from the Walla Walla County Department of Community Health with regard to testing.

The employee was wearing appropriate PPE while at work, including a medical procedure mask and eye protection throughout their day. All staff working in resident areas of our State Veterans Homes are wearing medical procedure masks and eye protection. We are asking all staff to pay close attention to whether they have any symptoms, including the presence of a fever.

As part of our ongoing screening process, all staff are screened upon arrival at work each day. This process includes a series of questions around whether symptoms are present and a temperature check. In addition, staff will take their temperature at least twice a day and are also asked to report any symptoms that occur after coming to work

The Walla Walla Veterans Home, is following guidance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service, which requires regular testing of all long-term care facility staff. This may result in the identification of asymptomatic carriers, but is an important tool in defending against COVID-19.

We are notifying residents, staff and family representatives via email or letter and a post to the website. We have informed employees of their possible exposure in the workplace but we will maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In an effort to provide information as quickly and accurately as possible, we have developed a website to provide information to families and resident representatives,

<https://www.dva.wa.gov/covid> Media inquiries should be addressed to heidia@dva.wa.gov.

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