



MEDIA RELEASE

San Juan County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 24, 2020

Update on Recent San Juan County Cases

June 24, 2020: Over the past week, San Juan County reported three new COVID-19 cases. Two were on San Juan Island and one on Lopez Island.

The County Health & Community Service Department's surveillance team has performed initial investigation, contact tracing, and testing for each of these cases.

It is important to know that monitoring of these cases is ongoing and the situation may evolve or change. That said, we want to provide a brief update on the current status of each case:

Case 16: an employee of Roche Harbor Resort on San Juan Island. In cooperation with Roche Harbor management, County staff identified and tested close contacts of the patient. All of those tests came back negative. One close contact who tested negative displayed symptoms consistent with the illness. Both that patient, the initial patient, and other close contacts have been requested to quarantine for two weeks out of an abundance of caution. All will be retested to confirm their negative status. The original transmission to patient appears to have occurred on the mainland.

Case 17: a resident of Village at the Harbour, a senior living community in Friday Harbor. The County Health team coordinated the testing of 61 individuals, including all staff and residents of the facility and a small number of other close contacts. All tests came back negative, including a retest of the initial positive individual. At this time it is not clear if the original positive was a rare false positive or if there was some other complication with the lab analysis. Regardless, ongoing testing will help ensure that there is in fact no current infection in the facility.

Case 18: a resident of Lopez Island. The close contacts in San Juan County were tested, and all results came back negative. They and the initial patient will be quarantining for two weeks out of an abundance of caution. The original transmission is unknown, but is suspected to have occurred from off-island, and is actively being investigated.

While these results are encouraging and suggest that these cases did not result in broader community spread, now is not the moment to relax. The disease is out there, and in many locations is spreading, including areas in Western Washington. The basic tools to protect ourselves remain vital: handwashing so frequently it feels abnormal, thoughtful social distancing whenever possible, and diligent covering of our faces whenever it is not. It is these steps that will help keep our community safe, our economy open, and our most vulnerable citizens protected.

We want to highlight the incredible work of the County surveillance team and the businesses, individuals, and organizations that so willingly cooperated with and supported their efforts. Public Health investigations are complex, labor intensive, and time-sensitive. Islanders from across the County form this team, and are working hard to help protect our communities. Their efforts are not unnoticed.

A few other key points:

RUMOR CONTROL: Over the course of the last week, there have been numerous rumors floating around the islands. Rarely did the rumors match the facts. We want to strongly encourage the community to avoid speculation and highlight that the sharing of second or third hand info or things learned from social media is rarely a useful endeavor.

NUMBERS REPORTING: Recently the County has been notified of several positive test results from the mainland for people with San Juan County addresses, but who have not been in San Juan County for some time. These situations can make for numbers reporting that fluctuates or does not match the actual public health response in the islands. The numbers reported on the San Juan County website will only reflect cases actively investigated by the County surveillance team. Please keep this in mind as we move forward.

FINALLY, MONITOR YOUR OWN HEALTH: San Juan County health officials remind everyone that if you have symptoms of COVID (including a fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath, new loss of taste or smell, nausea, sore throat, or diarrhea), please contact your medical provider immediately to discuss being tested, regardless of the severity of your symptoms.

As always, sincere thanks to the islands for your ongoing patience, effort, decency, and sacrifice. Nothing about this is easy, but islanders are doing their best to find our way through with our sense of community and humanity intact. Thank you.