



Press Release

Macon County Public Health Identifies COVID-19 Cluster

Macon County Public Health has identified a COVID-19 cluster of positive cases in Macon County's 9-1-1 Communication Center.

NC DPH defines clusters of COVID-19 in workplace, educational, and other community settings as:

- A minimum of 5 cases with illness onsets or initial positive results within a 14-day period AND
 - Plausible linkage between cases;
- where cases were present in the same setting during the same time-period (e.g., same shift, same classroom, same physical work area); that the timing fits with likely timing of exposure; and that there is no other more likely source of exposure for identified cases (e.g., household or close contact to a confirmed case in another setting).

Five staff persons at Macon County's 9-1-1 Communication Center have tested positive; all personnel are aware of their exposure and are currently being contacted for testing. Macon County 9-1-1 Communication Center employees are encouraged to quarantine if they experience symptoms; those who test positive will be given isolation orders. In addition, Macon County Emergency Management Office has been provided disinfection guidance.

MCPH is working to identify additional close contacts of these individuals. The CDC defines close contact as being within approximately 6 feet of a person with an infection with COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time of 10 minutes or longer. Based on information provided by the individual, county health officials will assess risks of exposure, determine which if any additional measures are needed such as temperature and symptom checks, quarantine and/or testing.

The entire state of North Carolina is under a "Safer at Home" executive order, currently under phase 3 with masks required to be worn when social distancing cannot be maintained. Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19; however, anyone of any age can become infected with this illness. Therefore, we ask that community members strictly follow the governor's orders and continue to practice social distancing, as well as safe hygiene measures such as hand washing and frequently cleaning touched objects and surfaces. The public can monitor the different phases of re-opening and learn more about the restrictions at <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance>.

Symptoms for COVID-19 are fever, cough, other lower respiratory illness (shortness of breath). If you believe that you may have COVID-19, please call the Health Department at 828-349-2517. The call center is open Monday through Friday from 8:30am – 4:00pm, until further notice.

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