



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Second COVID-19 Related Death in Whatcom County; Three Residents at Skilled Nursing Facility Test Positive

BELLINGHAM, WA – Whatcom Unified Command (WUC) announces the death of a second Whatcom County resident from the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19). This individual was a man in his 80s who was tested before he passed away at his home on March 20. His test results came back positive this morning. This announcement brings the total number of confirmed deaths in Whatcom County to two and the total number of confirmed positive test results to 14 as of 9:20am today, Saturday, March 21.

Also, two additional residents of a Bellingham skilled nursing facility have tested positive for COVID-19. There are now three confirmed cases at the Shuksan Healthcare Center. No deaths have been connected to that facility.

The two additional residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 are a female in her 60s and a female in her 70s. These two cases are in addition to one case announced yesterday, March 20, in a resident at the same facility, a male in his 80s. All the individuals are currently being cared for at Shuksan Healthcare Center.

Whatcom Unified Command and the staff of Shuksan Healthcare Center are deeply committed to the health and safety of all residents, and the larger Whatcom County community.

Whatcom County Health Department (WCHD) staff, working within Unified Command, are working to identify all close contacts and test everyone who needs to be tested. All consenting residents have been tested. Staff with respiratory symptoms were tested yesterday and are awaiting results. Test results are expected early next week. Staff who have been tested have also been excluded from work.

All close contacts of the three confirmed cases will be notified and given instructions for taking appropriate precautions.

The WCHD is working closely with infection prevention specialists from the Washington State Department of Health and staff at the facility to ensure the proper care for ill patients while protecting uninfected residents and staff. Residents are isolated. Both residents and staff will continue to be monitored frequently for symptoms.



Staff at the facility have been taking proactive measures to protect residents and staff due to the threat of COVID-19. They have also been following the orders under the Governor's proclamation from March 16, which included prohibiting visitors and screening all staff for fever and respiratory symptoms daily.

Whatcom Unified Command is working to fulfill resource requests, including getting N95 masks and gloves to local healthcare providers, including Shuksan Healthcare Center.

WUC appreciates the cooperation of the staff and leadership at Shuksan Healthcare Center during this difficult time. They are doing everything they can to protect the health of residents, and Whatcom Unified will continue to work with them to coordinate care and resources.

For more information on novel coronavirus

While most cases of COVID-19 are mild to moderate, approximately 15% of people infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 will have serious illness. It is vitally important that people continue to take steps to protect family members, friends and neighbors from this infection. Stay home as much as possible and limit exposure to others. If you are at risk for severe disease, it is especially important to take the necessary steps to limit potential exposure. Guidelines can be found at www.whatcomcounty.us/covid.

This is an emerging outbreak with rapidly evolving information. Updates will be made as new information is available on the Whatcom County Health Department website and the Washington State coronavirus website.

Questions for WCHD can also be emailed to covid@co.whatcom.wa.us

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