



# Yakima Health District

## Media Release

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### Update to COVID-19 Outbreak at Costco

**Yakima, WA** – The Yakima Health District continues to investigate an outbreak of COVID-19 at Costco. After conducting site-wide testing, as recommended by YHD, there are now a total of 145 employees that have tested positive for COVID-19. All 145 individuals that have tested positive are currently completing their isolation or quarantine period. After reviewing the number of cases, and the timeline in which they were identified, there is evidence to show that this sharp increase in cases mimics the type of activity that happens after some sort of super-spreader event where multiple people are infected at the same time.

When a large outbreak is identified, in any business, the Yakima Health District's COVID-19 Outbreak Response team follows up with the company to request information for all employees who have tested positive for COVID-19, which department they work in, and when they tested positive. After analyzing this information, the Outbreak Response Team consults with the Director of Disease Control and the Health Officer to determine next steps for that specific businesses based on several factors. These factors include:

- Can the business demonstrate that they are complying with COVID-19 Safety Precautions?
- Is there evidence of ongoing transmission?
- Can the business conduct their recommended facility sanitization when their business is closed?
- Is there an increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 to the community?

For Costco specifically, site-wide testing was recommended given the large number of infected employees. When site-wide testing is recommended, the organization provides testing to all employees, regardless of whether they were identified as an initial close contact to a positive COVID-19 case or not. Costco will continue to provide on-going site-wide testing for their employees moving forward to monitor the outbreak.

To date, the Yakima Health District has not recommended that any business close due to COVID-19 infection among its staff. Businesses with an identified outbreak are provided education on employee testing, return to work guidance, and cleaning and disinfecting practices. All businesses with outbreaks that have been investigated have followed the recommendations provided by the Yakima Health District. These businesses have not shown ongoing transmission after these recommendations have been implemented. Other businesses in the community that have closed after identifying positive cases of COVID-19, have decided to do so on their own, out of an abundance of caution, and not because of a recommendation to close from the Yakima Health District.



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## QUOTES

1. "When there is an outbreak reported, it does not matter the type or the size of the businesses, our Outbreak Response Team will respond to each one in the same, systematic way. Identifying positive cases, protecting the public, and working to contain the outbreak are the health district's top priorities. Our goal, even outside of COVID-19, has always been to work with our local businesses to educate and ensure that we are all doing everything we can to keep each other healthy." Andre Fresco, Executive Director, Yakima Health District.
2. "As Costco continues its site wide testing, we anticipate the number of cases to continue to go up over the next few days as results are received." Melissa Sixberry, RN, Director of Disease Control
3. "At this point in time, all positive cases have been identified and sent home. Weekly site-wide testing will ensure that any new cases that occur, will be promptly identified, and those staff members will also be directed to isolate and quarantine. This, in addition to ensuring that Costco, and its shoppers, continue to follow the proper COVID-19 safety precautions, will mitigate the risk for potential COVID-19 infection." Dr. Larry Jecha, Interim Health Officer
4. "COVID-19 activity levels continue to increase throughout the entire county. We need the help of the community to also follow the COVID-19 safety recommendations so we can keep work places safe, so we can keep schools safe, so we can keep each other safe by not overwhelming our health system. We are seeing record high hospitalizations this week and we need your help to stop the spread. Remember, masks alone are not an effective intervention. It is masks, coupled with social distancing and frequent handwashing, and most importantly, staying home when you are sick, that will help us stop the spread of COVID-19.

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