



Public Health Division

County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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STATE, LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS ADDRESSING WATSONVILLE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Santa Cruz County, Calif. – State and local public health officials are working closely with the Watsonville Post-Acute Center (WPA) skilled nursing facility to manage a serious outbreak with support from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH).

Forty-six WPA residents and 15 staff have tested positive for COVID-19. The County regrets to announce that five additional residents have either died from COVID-19 or passed away with COVID-19 listed as a contributing cause, bringing the total to nine. Our condolences go out to these individuals' families and friends.

Since the outbreak began, CDPH officials have conducted multiple site visits to provide assessments and recommendations to WPA management. Santa Cruz County health officials are working with the facility on a daily basis to review protocols on isolation, quarantine, testing, and screening, as well as resource requests for staff and supplies critical to resolving the outbreak. The California National Guard is also providing staffing support to the facility.

“Watsonville Post-Acute informed CDPH and the County as soon as the first resident tested positive,” stated Dr. David Ghilarducci, Deputy Health Officer for Santa Cruz County. “Our staff is focused on the outbreak and we will continue to work closely with WPA.”

At the onset of the pandemic, Santa Cruz County staff from the Communicable Disease Unit (CDU) and Emergency Preparedness Unit worked with each of the seven skilled nursing facilities in the county to develop a plan that included a comprehensive checklist tool, site maps and scenario planning in the event of an outbreak. Strategies on testing staff and residents, maximizing PPE and containment of infection were also included in the plan. The plan is being put into action as WPA works to mitigate the impact of the virus.

Although the rate of new cases in Santa Cruz County continues to decline, skilled nursing and long-term care facilities remain at elevated risk for COVID-19 due to the congregate living setting and the vulnerability of the population.

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