MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: **May 8, 2020**
EVENT: **Kenosha County Emergency Management COVID-19 Virus**
LOCATION: **County of Kenosha**

In an effort to contain localized outbreaks of COVID-19, the Kenosha County Division of Health has partnered with the Wisconsin National Guard to conduct testing at select private employers.

This testing has occurred over the last week and may continue in the future as needed.

"We are working proactively with the National Guard, actively testing workers in strategic locations so that we can box in this virus and limit outbreaks as much as possible," said Kenosha County Health Officer Dr. Jen Freiheit. "We appreciate the collaboration of the employers that have welcomed this testing in their facilities."

This week's testing occurred Saturday, May 2, at Calumet Diversified Meats in the Village of Pleasant Prairie, and Tuesday and Wednesday, May 5 and 6, at Kenosha Beef, International in the Town of Paris.

In total, 22 out of 135 employees tested at Calumet Diversified Meats tested positive for COVID-19. At Kenosha Beef Intl., 419 employees were tested, with 15 yielding positive results, so far, as lab results were still coming in on Friday afternoon.

Freiheit said all this testing has occurred with the complete cooperation of the employers, which were identified as sites for National Guard testing after small outbreaks occurred.

No employees have been hospitalized from positives at Kenosha Beef, Intl. Two Hispanic male employees of Calumet Diversified Meats have died from COVID-19, ages 51 and 63, one with a history of comorbidities.

Both meat processing facilities took extensive measures to mitigate the spread of the virus: Kenosha Beef Intl by providing each employee with a thermometer and shutting down two lines for 14 days after their first positive. All employees wear masks.

"The safety, health, and well-being of all of our employees is number one priority," said Dennis Vignieri, President and CEO of Kenosha Beef Intl. "We are doing everything within our capacity to mitigate the negative effect of this virus."

Calumet Diversified Meats shut down its processing for one week to disinfect and for the health of its employees, operating with minimal employees for the two weeks prior. All employees wear masks and face shields. The company also staggered start times to social distance the entrance and have painted the floor with 6-foot markings.

"We are doing everything possible to keep every employee safe and will continue to do so throughout this pandemic," states company administration.

Both companies take temperatures and do symptom screenings on each employee and visitor prior to entrance. Both have staggered breaks and lunches, installing plexiglass on the lunch tables for separation.

Freiheit noted that the results of this testing is reflected within the countywide case numbers that are reported to the state daily and published on the Kenosha County COVID-19 Response Hub website, at www.kenoshacounty.org/covid-19.

"With increased testing comes increased known positives," Freiheit said. "These numbers may seem discouraging, but the more we know about where positive cases are popping up and how they're spreading, the sooner we will be able to contain COVID-19."

The National Guard's first COVID-19 screening in Kenosha County was late last month, when all inmates and employees of the Kenosha County Detention Center and Pretrial Facility were tested. Roughly 670 individuals were tested, yielding positive results for 79 inmates and five employees — all of whom were placed in appropriate isolation.

The Kenosha County Joint Information Center encourages people with questions about COVID-19 that they cannot answer online to dial 2-1-1 or visit the 2-1-1 website, https://211wisconsin.communityos.org/.

Together, we can and will slow the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

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