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State selects Maple Lane as potential COVID-19 isolation and quarantine site

Chehalis, WA – The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has identified the Department of Corrections - Maple Lane property in Thurston County as an additional location for novel coronavirus (COVID-19) quarantine and isolation should the need arise. At this time, there is no need. The risk from COVID-19 to the general public in Washington remains low. As of this date, only one person in Washington has ever tested positive for COVID-19. There have been no suspected cases to date in Lewis County. However, by planning now, the site can be set up more quickly if needed.

The Maple Lane location would be the home to two pods of RVs, similar to what DOH has set up in Shoreline. Individuals who would use this service would be safely isolated and would pose no risk to employees at the Maple Lane facility or anyone nearby.

Isolation and quarantine are often used interchangeably by the media, but they are really two different things. Isolation is an after-the-fact tool that keeps sick patients away from other people so they can’t pass the disease. Quarantine is a precautionary tool. It means keeping a person who is not currently sick, but is likely to have been exposed, away from other people until it is known for sure the person is not sick and cannot spread the disease.

If used for isolation, one RV pod would house individuals who:
  ● Have potentially been exposed to COVID-19,
  ● Have symptoms of COVID-19, and
  ● Are unable to remain isolated at home

If used for quarantine, one RV pod would house healthy people who:
  ● Have potentially been exposed to COVID-19
  ● Have no symptoms, and
  ● Can’t safely quarantine at home

As a reminder, this COVID-19 is spread during close contact within 6 feet or less of an infected person. The purpose of isolation and quarantine is to prevent disease spread. There is no known risk to anyone outside that 6-foot perimeter.
Lewis County Public Health & Social Services (LCPHSS) has been closely monitoring the Novel Coronavirus, now known as COVID-19, since the first U.S. case was diagnosed here in Washington. Common human coronaviruses usually cause mild to moderate upper-respiratory tract illnesses, like the common cold. Most people get infected with one or more of these viruses at some point in their lives. What is different about COVID-19 is that it has never been seen before in humans. That is why it is called “novel.”

Because COVID-19 is novel, there are no ready-made vaccines or cures. That means the scientific community must quickly learn as much as it can about the disease, including how to accurately test for it, how it passes from person to person, and how to prevent its spread. It also must quickly learn what happens to people who get sick from it, how to care for those patients, how to cure people, and ultimately how to prevent illness through vaccination.

Public Health Tools
When any outbreak occurs, isolation and quarantine are just two of the tools Public Health can use, even when the disease is novel. The other tools are surveillance, contact tracing, situational updates, non-pharmaceutical interventions, vaccines, and post-exposure prophylaxis.

1. Surveillance
Washington State law requires that certain diseases that are easily spread from person to person and can negatively impact communities be reported by healthcare providers when a patient is suspected or confirmed to have one of those diseases. Public Health may then begin contact investigations to discover who else may have been exposed to the disease and might now be at risk of getting sick from the same infection.

2. Contact Tracing
Contact investigations help limit the spread of disease by tracing all who may have come into contact with the sick person. They identify others who may have been exposed, may also get sick, and possibly spread the disease to more people. Like dropping a pebble in a pond, contact investigations start with the sick person and spread outward to anyone who had close contact, then further to anyone who may have had any contact.

Finding contacts and asking them to stay home can prevent them from infecting a whole new group of people. This is a labor-intensive, time-consuming process.

3. Situational Updates
Another public health tool is providing ongoing, accurate information to schools, community healthcare partners and the general public. People get their news from any number of sources these days. Public Health’s job is to do what it can to make sure people are informed and educated. This includes distributing accurate information in a timely manner. It also includes countering misinformation spread person-to-person or via mass media and social media.

4. Non-pharmaceutical Interventions
Medicines are a great tool to help prevent disease spread and reduce mortality. However, there are times when not enough medicine is available, or in the case of COVID-19, medicine does not yet exist. Then Public Health turns to its tools known as “non-pharmaceutical interventions”, or NPIs. The first goal of NPIs is to reduce disease spread across geographic areas. The second goal is to reduce the number of people who get sick while buying time for medications to become available. NPIs include:
• Reminding people to wash their hands frequently, cover their coughs and sneezes, and don’t touch their faces with unclean hands;
• Advising people to stay home if sick, and if possible, keep other exposed family members home, too.
• Encouraging social distancing by trying to discourage people from gathering. Suggestions range from working split shifts so not as many people are in the office at the same time, to closing schools and canceling mass public events like concerts or sporting events.

5. Vaccines
Any novel virus kick-starts a race to develop a vaccine that can limit the spread of the virus or prevent widespread outbreaks in the future. People who get the disease may build immunity for life. Vaccinating others gives them protection without having to suffer through the disease.

6. Post-exposure Prophylaxis
Vaccines received before being exposed to a virus build antibodies to prevent people from getting sick if later exposed to that virus. Post-exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) is an after-the-fact attempt at preventing illness. For some diseases, medications can be taken after exposure to reduce the likelihood of getting sick. However, just like a vaccine or a cure, effective PEP may not already exist for a novel virus.

**What can Lewis County residents do?**
The best thing anyone can do is stay informed. Use knowledgeable sources you can trust to bring you just the facts without non-medical professionals’ analysis or opinion added. Knowledgeable and trusted sources LCPHSS recommends for up-to-date public information on COVID-19 are:

- Washington State Department of Health (DOH), [www.doh.wa.gov/coronavirus](http://www.doh.wa.gov/coronavirus)
- Our Twitter feed, @LCPHSS

In addition, DOH has established a call center to answer questions from the public. If you have questions about what is happening in Washington, how the virus is spread, and what to do if you have symptoms, call 1-800-525-0127 and press #.

# # #
Contact Investigation involves finding, interviewing, and potentially testing anyone who might have come into contact with you if you possibly or definitely have a communicable disease.