

Date: Saturday 10 October 2020

On Wednesday of this week, NMMI was made aware of a staff member who had been listed as a close-contact of an off-campus positive case for COVID-19. That staff member immediately left the campus to quarantine and test. The staff member tested positive for the COVID-19 virus on Thursday. The CDC close-contact protocol was initiated and identified 3 other staff members from the same department. Those staff members were quarantined and tested for the COVID-19 virus. We were notified on Friday that two of the three had tested positive for the virus. All 3 are required to isolate or quarantine per NMDOH protocols and are off campus. We have addressed their workspaces for proper cleaning and disinfecting.

Upon learning of the first case and the other potential staff members, we took the initiative on Thursday to quarantine and test a group of 15 cadets (a team) not identified in the initial close-contact trace, but coached by two of the three subsequent staff members. These cadets were quarantined until the results of their tests were known on Friday. Unfortunately, after first being told all were negative, a corrected coding error revealed that 4 of the cadets tested positive for the virus. All 15 of those cadets are now in isolation or quarantine. Again, taking the initiative to get out in front of the circumstance, we had already identified a second tier of 14 cadets who might be close contacts with the first group to be tested. They are quarantined at this time and were tested Friday. We are waiting on their test results.

We are working with our on-site infirmary staff, a local lab, the NMDOH, NMHED and NMEVD with regards to testing and reporting. We are addressing various common spaces to engage with the deep cleaning and disinfecting protocols.

These cases represent the first time in over 9 weeks we have had the virus detected within the corps and the first since we initially began accepting cadets for the fall. What we have done together has worked, but we will need the help of all to finish strong. We now have 6 weeks until we complete our Fall 2020 schedule. We are working diligently to mitigate the impact to the remainder of the corps and of course our utmost attention is for the wellbeing and care of those infected. If there is good news, the cadets identified as positive appear at this time to be asymptomatic.

We have known our highest risk was for the virus to be carried onto the Post, not from the corps itself. We began with 15 asymptomatic cases all the way back in July. We managed those cases, so these cases are not our first rodeo. However, we all must remain diligent and aware of our personal situations and the ability for this disease to spread.

We have asked and will continue to enforce the basic protocols of masks, social distancing, and hygiene. We will continue to promote good cleaning and disinfecting protocols. We are well supplied with PPE and paper goods. We will continue to enforce the closed campus status and ask for the continued support of our local parents to help by staying away from the campus for the semester. The situation is a reminder for all of us to maintain the protocols against the spread of the virus. We will keep you updated as the situation unfolds. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact COL David West or myself.

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