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### **Weld County Sheriff's Office begins COVID-19 testing of all jail inmates**

The Weld County Sheriff's Office began testing on Wednesday all inmates of the Weld County Jail for the respiratory illness COVID-19.

Last week, the sheriff's office requested 1,500 testing kits from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. The test kits arrived Tuesday at the jail.

Staff will assist the jail's medical provider, Turnkey Health Clinics, with administering the tests to all 468 inmates. Testing of the existing jail population is expected to take two days. Results are expected early next week. Testing of new arrestees will be ongoing.

COVID-19 testing supplies have been scarce throughout the country since the Coronavirus pandemic arrived in the U.S. in late January. Early on, the sheriff's office only received enough kits to test inmates who were showing symptoms of COVID-19, in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

With supplies now more readily available, Weld County Sheriff Steve Reams decided last week to request several thousand kits to test the entire inmate population even though widespread testing of asymptomatic people is not recommended by the CDC.

"We're testing the entire inmate population out of an over-abundance of caution because of the challenges posed by asymptomatic carriers who can spread the infection without knowing they have COVID-19," Reams said. "We want to know how widespread COVID-19 truly is in the facility and determine if the protocols we began to implement in late February successfully mitigated the spread of Coronavirus in the jail."

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Inmates who test positive will be medically isolated. In order to be removed from medical isolation, an inmate must receive two negative tests in a row.

About March 30, the Weld County Jail experienced a COVID-19 outbreak among its inmates. It was later determined seven people contracted the virus during that initial wave.

To date, a running total of 10 inmates have tested positive for COVID-19. Three of those 10 were positive prior to their booking into the jail. State statute mandates a period of incarceration for certain offenses even in times of stay at home orders or during a pandemic health emergency.

Of the 10 total inmates who have tested positive for COVID-19, two remain in the jail. Both were on medical isolation as of Wednesday in accordance with CDC guidelines, as they have each received one negative test for the virus. Results of a second test are pending.

Eighteen jail deputies have tested positive for COVID-19 to date. All have returned to work.

Due to logistical issues, testing is limited to jail inmates. The sheriff's office continues to encourage all employees to seek testing if they are feeling ill or think they've come into close contact with someone who is COVID-19 positive.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Steve Reams'.

Steve Reams – Sheriff