



Press Release

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
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COVID outbreak hobbles Umatilla Tribal Fire Department

MISSION - The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) Public Safety Department has experienced a COVID-19 outbreak. Five employees have tested positive for the virus.

CTUIR has activated their mutual aid agreements with Pendleton Fire Department and East Umatilla County Fire & Rescue so there will be no disruption in residential and structural fire protection on the Umatilla Indian Reservation (UIR). BIA Wildland firefighters continue to be an active asset on the UIR.

“We are taking every precaution to make sure the community is safe. Fire protection will continue thanks to our partners. Contact tracing is nearly complete,” said CTUIR Board of Trustees Chair Kat Brigham. “This outbreak shows how COVID can shutter critical public services. Fortunately, our Emergency Operating Plan insures continuity of services.”

Staff in the Public Safety Department are being tested by Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center, as well as all individuals who have had contact with those who tested positive. This includes co-workers, family members and community members. Additionally, the Public Safety Department have initiated several safety measures and cleaning protocols in their facilities and vehicles.

Timely testing and contact tracing are of utmost importance to slowing the spread among the CTUIR community and neighboring communities. Unless you have been named as a contact by a case or have been identified as a contact through public safety logs, your risk of exposure is low at this time. Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center has extended their testing hours to 6 p.m. today to accommodate testing related to this outbreak.

“We urge anyone who tests positive to be as thorough as possible when they speak to contact tracers. They need to provide all of the names of people they have interacted with,” said Yellowhawk Medical Director Dr. James Winde.

The CTUIR Public Safety Department houses the Umatilla Tribal Fire Department, Umatilla Tribal Police Department, Tribal Prosecutor, Emergency Management, Family Violence Services and the Office of Child Support Enforcement.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is made up of the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla Tribes, formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley, 12 statute 945. In 1949, the Tribes adopted a constitutional form of government to protect, preserve and enhance the treaty rights guaranteed under federal statute.

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