

[THIS IS AN UNEDITED REALTIME TRANSCRIPT. I AM A NATIONALLY-CERTIFIED CLOSED CAPTIONER, BUT THIS IS NOT A CERTIFIED TRANSCRIPT, IT IS TO BE USED FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY -- KATHY ROBSON]

>> TOM: Welcome to the Covid-19 incident briefing, I'm Tom Kohley, carbon county Disaster Emergency Services Coordinator. With me is Dr. Bill George Public Health Officer for the County. Also with me is Jason Mahoney Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. Today's briefing we'll be pretty brief. We have three items to touch upon. This weekend's community testing event, Dr. George is going to go into detail about the purpose of the test and then Jason Mahoney will talk about future surveillance testing that will be happening in the Red Lodge area. Jumping into this weekend's event, we have a communitywide Covid-19 testing communitywide Covid-19 testing, occurring this Friday and Saturday June 12 and 13. The time is 9:00A.M. to 3:00 P.M. And it's at the Red Lodge High School parking lot. Again this is a free event, there's no cost to any participants. Noninvasive, results in days. A little bit more about the event. In testing is intended for all Carbon County residents, year-round and seasonal residents. What we're trying to test are the people who may be asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic individuals.

If you're feeling ill the day of the event we encourage you to contact your local healthcare provider and have separate testing.

Friday and Saturday we're just trying to capture the asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic individuals.

This is very quick and easy type of testing, you do not have to get out of your vehicle, it's a drive-up testing, should only take five to ten minutes per vehicle.

We encourage you to come with multiple people in the car.

The test will be self-administered.

You will drive up, you will be handed a swab, the EMT or nurse will ask you to swab the inside of your nostril, you will give back the swab, it will be put in a vial, and you will be going down the road, quick and easy, nonpainful.

Results of the test should be delivered back to our public health department.

To 5 day depending if it's done at the state or shipped out to a private lab.

Here is the big thing, you will be contacted only if your test is positive.

If you do not hear after five days any word from us, that's a good sign, no news is good news, that means it's your test is negative and you do not need to do anything further.

If you do test positive it is -- we will follow up with you, Dr. George or public health, and we will likely perhaps do a secondary test to confirm the test, an if the second test comes through you'll work with our public health officials in terms of isolation and other needs when you drive up, we're going to ask you for information, paperwork will need

to be filled out, get your contact information, and this information will be stored at public health.

The only pub purpose is to follow up if there is a positive result.

Children under the age of 18 have to sign a content -- will have their past or guardian sign a consent form if they want to participate in the testing.

Again don't need to bring any special identification to the testing.

We're trying to make it as easy as possible.

If you want to make this flow even smoother we do encourage to you go to CarbonAlert.org, some of the forms you need to fill out on-site will be available on that, download pre-fill them and bring them to the testing site on Saturday or Friday.

Again, we're trying to test only asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic people.

If you have any of the symptoms that are listed on the screen the day of the event, contact your healthcare providing and make special arrangements for testing through them.

I did forget to mention that questions can be submitted via Facebook, if you have any questions regarding this event or any testing in our community submit here, we have knowledgeable people at our table on answer those questions. Also I forgot to mention today's event will be closed captioned by Kathy Robson, thank you, Kathy, for doing that.

At this time -- one more thing, the general flow of the testing event itself, as I mention it's at the Red Lodge high school parking lot.

We would like people to enter in on Broadway Avenue North, turning east on Fifth Street

next to First Interstate Bank, traveling all the way down to Chambers, heading north on Chambers, past the football field, into the parking lot. Before you reach the parking lot you will be greeted by an Army National Guardsman, they are there to assist us with the event.

And you will be greeted by them and provided with further instructions.

We will be having at least two to three lanes that people can pull their vehicle into.

You will be greeted by a nurse or EMT who will help you administer the test.

You will than be exiting through Second Street back on to Broadway.

That covers the logistics of the event.

Now, to answer the question that's in most people's minds, why are we doing this event. I'm going to turn it over to Dr. George and he can talk a bit about the purpose of the testing.

>> DR. GEORGE: I want to add about the process.

These tests are very sensitive and accurate.

Very accurate.

If there is a positive, if the first test is positive at that time you will be asked to guarantee so as to not spread it, and we'll give I instructions if you need to household quarantine or support if that's impossible.

We'll get confirmed testing.

It's unlikely that a test is false positive but there is a possibility of that.

So to understand a little bit about why we're doing this, why we're doing periodic surveillance testing which Jason will talk about, you have to understand what phase we are in

now in dealing with this illness and this pandemic.

We started with what's called containment, us and the rest of the country and the world, when everybody saw how dangerous and quickly it spread everything shut down.

They shut down in order to get supplies, to understand the virus, and then engage with it in a way that can keep the community open.

That phase that we're in is called suppression.

Our goal is to suppress this virus when it comes to our community.

I say when because even since Memorial Day, even though numbers are very decreased in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, where we all watched what happened there, it is starting to resurge significantly in smaller communities and other parts of the country, especially the midwest and west.

Ed that's our goal.

This is part of the goal.

Our goal is to prevent surge of increases in the community of infections and to protect our vulnerable populations, nursing homes, assisted living group homes, and also to assure that we have healthcare capacity which that means ability to have a functioning emergency room, a hospital that's able to function, in a small community we have to be mindful we want to make sure we have a functional police department, paramedics. We don't have a lot of backup of these folks.

If two of our paramedics are in quarantine, ill, it will be difficult.

We will monitor that situation if and when infections start to come to our community.

Red Lodge has been picked like a

few other communities, we're designated as a gateway community, destination community by the governor.

That means we're more vulnerable because we have lots of tourists that come to this area all over the country and all over the world.

I also think we're vulnerable because in Montana, we haven't been exposed to this virus. Very little.

Because we kind of limited our border significantly early on. The virus seems to have started from the coast and we have, people really did heed the phase 1 orders and the mitigation advice of testing away from each other and everything that we've talked about.

Our natural immunity to the virus is very low.

I think that also makes us vulnerable.

So, the reason why we're having this event is because of the nature of this infection.

What's called incubation period. Incubation period, when you get infected, how long does it take to show symptoms.

The flu for example is one to four days.

Usually you start showing symptoms of the flu one or two days, up to four days after you've been exposed to the virus.

For this, for Covid-19, the incubation period is anywhere from 1 to 14 days.

So oftentimes people don't show any symptoms after they've been infected with this virus.

It is thought although it's being debated a bit, but it is thought that during that time you can transmit this virus.

It's almost certain.

The question is how easy is it to transfer during that time.

Likely as start coughing,

sneezing, can you transmit it more but they feel a few days before those symptoms start it's possibility that that's the time where you transmit this virus the most.

So what we're looking for, because of that, you're looking for people without symptoms that may be infected so we can find these folks fast, isolate them, find out where in the community they came from, and make a difference as far as suppressing this virus which I talked about before.

The reasons on why we're doing this event is number one to look for those cases in the community, if we have any at this time.

We have had a few weeks now of lots of traffic, lots of visitors here, is the virus here and not showing symptoms yet. I don't think -- I'd be surprised if we have significant amount of infections at this time but I wouldn't be surprised if we have some.

Another reason why we're doing this, is to look at the landscape, base line of where we are as a community. And to try and find which part of the community, if we have infections, in the restaurants, are they in grocery stores, those kind of things.

We can target those areas to mitigate more or to be more careful so as not to spread this infection.

Another use for testing because it really does tell you only if you have an infection tempt of the test, another use to for that is people use this to plan in the short term F there's a group of people, relatives, parents who haven't visited for a while you can say I'm going to get tested and visit them if I have a negative test.

Between the time you are tested and while you're waiting for the results you need to somewhat self quarantine, avoid people so you don't catch the virus before the results are made available to you.

That is not 100% foolproof. There is a chance that you were exposed to the virus a few days before and the test because it was early did not pick up the virus on the test.

You do need to be aware of that. It gives you a lot more information, gives you some peace of mind that you are negative with a negative test. Anything else that I can add on that?

>> TOM: How about that last point, use of the test to help plan for a sieve safer visit.

>> DR. GEORGE: I just talked about that.

A lot 6 people get, I'll say a little bit about the test itself, Tom mentioned it, it's a swab test on the nose.

We're looking for the presence of the virus.

A lot of people have been asking about antibody testing.

Antibody testing means it's blood draw through your arm and it tells us if you've been exposed to the virus.

We won't be doing those tests, it will be important tool as we go on.

But we won't -- that's not part of this event at all.

Mostly because we're still, health experts are working out on how long the protection lasts.

We don't want to reassure people you have the antibody and they start acting like they cannot transmit the disease and then three months later they can.

>> JASON: All right.

The last thing we had on the agenda was to talk about

processes where we're going to begin periodic testing of frontline workers. Now, some of this testing has begun to try to protect some of our most vulnerable populations in our nursing homes, our assisted living facilities, et cetera. We appreciate their participation in those efforts. What we're going to do in our next stages of this testing, really what we are talking about is periodic testing of these frontline workers trying to gain a representative sample to understand the present state of the virus in the county if there is any. The folks tested under this process are the frontline staff that have a higher than normal risk of exposure. Some of the folks that we're talking about might be grocery store, convenience store workers, the folks who work in restaurants or bars and have interaction with the public, folks who work in hotels, our chamber of commerce workers who have a lot of interaction with tour issues coming into the County, and healthcare workers as well. These groups have been identified as folks that have a higher than normal risk than coming into contact with some one who may have the virus and definitely are folks that we want to make sure are kept safe and if they do come in contact with the virus we can identify that and limit the spread throughout the community. Things that you'll see over time, as we get through the first set of these tests, we'll work with the groups that I just mentioned. From then on who we test, how frequently we test you may

see us vary those points based on the prevalence of what we're finding and the prevalence of the virus and the County. Anything to add Dr. George? >> DR. GEORGE: I don't think so. It's just to remind everybody, it is important to be tested if you have any of the symptoms. And I mean any of the symptoms. There's a list on our website. They just added runny nose believe it or not. It is easy to get a test at this time. Besides what Jason is talking about, testing people without symptoms on a routine basis, we encourage anybody with symptoms to be tested. That's an easy phone call to the hospital or to your clinic and they will direct you to the process that we have had ongoing in our community. We do have plenty, we have an ability to test which most communities like ours did not have three months ago. >> JASON: That's all we have on our agenda. Have we received any questions? >> Yes. I have a question for I think specifically Dr. George. Can you speak about the 4th of July parade and the risk that day. >> DR. GEORGE: So, part of a service that our team here, our Covid-19 incident management team has offered to our community is to look at events that wish to happen and to see if they're consistent with the directives from the state and our directives presently pertain to phase 2. So people whether they're having a parade, a large wedding, will present their plan through our website on how they believe they're going to make it consistent with those

directives.

Phase 2 right now is if you have an event it should be less than 50 people.

If it's greater than 50 people then you have to allow for social distancing, the six-foot rule to exist.

You can have clusters of families, it gets a little complicated, I won't get into the weeds.

That is one service that we offer.

So we've been approached by the rodeo, the parade, the Beartooth Rally, numerous events and it's taken a lot of work.

We have done our best to help people meet those directives.

And when we're up against a wall and we find out that really they've tried, we tried, and we cannot meet those directives then we tell them they likely not should proceed with the event.

Let me speak to the rodeo first, and I love the rodeo, many of you know I've been involved with rodeo since I came 30 years ago. The rodeo could have happened but it would have been such less people in attendance to fulfill that criteria, financially would have been difficult.

Also, the chance that a week or two weeks before because we have had surges in our community, that we would have to stop the rodeo at this time, was too great of a risk.

That's an example on how that went through.

The parade we're trying to make changes work with the parade committee to get everyone to space out.

Will some people try to pack into bars and not be careful?

Absolutely, we know that.

Enforcement of these things has been very difficult.

Across our state and across our country.

We really are leaving it up to personal responsibility using the education of these directives.

However we thought a parade -- we think a parade can happen safely if we space out the parade, lengthen the route, if people -- if we create space for people to have takeout food.

If the restaurants and the bars go by the phase 2 directives of month more than 75% capacity.

Besides what I talked about being labeled as a destination or gateway community, businesses also have funding in order to make their establishments safer. Each business can access a significant amount of funds to make it safer.

We hope those things happen too.

So we give guidance and we give our opinion, we don't shut things down, we don't give the okay for things but we try to support these events to make them consistent with what phase we're in now.

On the backend, we suppress, like I talk about we try to suppress any cases that come from these events so they don't harm our vulnerable populations, we still have healthcare capacity.

Because we're Red Lodge, because we have a lot of visitors, because we have a parade we know we will have more infections than maybe other communities that are more isolated.

Can we deal with them?

I hope so, I think so, I think we've been preparing for this. And as has been said before, we're trying to learn to live with this virus.

If you are in that vulnerable group, those are the kinds of events you should think about not attending.

Is the event that happen here in the summer that bring a lot of people from all over to our community.

>> On a similar line are there restrictions on the Beartooth Rally, such as street dances.

>> DR. GEORGE: You want to talk about that?

>> JASON: We have worked with some of the groups that have previously planned street dances, and help them review the directives and the needs that they would have to meet to have a safe event under the phase 2 directives.

And in the end our recommendation on street dances has been that it would be very difficult to meet those objectives and keep folks safe and our recommendation has been to cancel or postpone a lot of events of that type, specifically some around the Beartooth Rally.

Everyone has made sacrifices and these are more sacrifices that will have to be made to keep folks safe.

We're hoping if we're able to continue a little bit to keep ourselves safe, to manage and limit the spread of the virus, that these unfortunate postponements and things like that will not be by any means a permanent thing.

We hope by next summer, at least, we will be back to normal.

But some of the street dances have been things that we have had to recommend postponing just due to the lack of the ability to maintain social distancing and those other safety measures.

>> DR. GEORGE: And also the lack of ability to limit it at 50 people.

How do you limit a street dance to 50 people.

So that's an example.

People have said that we are allowing, which is not the right terminology, the Beartooth Rally and why didn't we allow the Beartooth rodeo.

It's not a question of us allowing or not.

The plan put forth of the event that they have at the rodeo grounds is much less people. They can't absorb the risk of possibly having it to be cancelled a week or two before. The Rally plan shows that people will be socially distanced, it's a much smaller event than the Home of Champions rodeo.

>> Question on how people will be notified about the results of the testing.

>> DR. GEORGE: Phone call will happen either from me or one of my two public health nurses.

>> JASON: ANYONE who tests positive.

>> DR. GEORGE: Only who test positive.

>> JASON: And I believe our plan is once all of the test results have been returned we'll let everyone know, we'll make an announcement that the test results are all in and if you have not been notified it's safe to assume that you did not test positive.

We don't have the capability to call everyone that attends the event but at the same time we want to make sure that everyone understands the test result through those pathways.

>> Are there any restrictions on tourism or visitors to the County right now.

>> DR. GEORGE: Just the restrictions that are put in the state's phase 2 guidelines. Those are oh the restrictions.

How many people can go to a restaurant or bar, our usual six-foot social distancing.

>> JASON: A lot of other mitigations.

>> DR. GEORGE: Restrictions for tourists, anyone can come here from anywhere and stay at our hotels. Hotels have never been shut down. You have to remember even though it seems like a lot of people are around and they are, it's still quite a bit less, our hotels do not have, as we keep in touch with them, reservations for the summertime are way down. Maybe that will change. A lot of people are around, they are, but it's still less. Our hotels test on demand. They want a test, they get a test. We're pretty close to that in Montana I believe. So I think if we get to that point it won't be necessary to have a whole community event that we're having now.

>> Some states are requiring documentation of a recent negative test to be exempted from their quarantine. Will this be possible.

>> DR. GEORGE: Right now to get out of quarantine there's a couple of ways to do that. One is a certain amount of time after symptoms start. And the other is two negative tests within 24 hours apart. I think that's what they're referring to. That still is the case here, we have the ability to do that.

>> Looking for additional questions. We'll give it a few minutes for the delay to catch up on our production versus the web. I will mention that if you do have questions after this event, you can submit them via Facebook, via our e-mail, or our phone. Can you leave a message there, contact information. It's all on CarbonAlert.org.

And we can get to those questions after. A question will guidelines be enforced during summer events, IE restaurants and bar capacity.

>> DR. GEORGE: We encourage the bar and restaurant owners to enforce those guidelines. They are a directive from the state. Go we have the ability to count people in bars, seeing if it's truly 75% to stay at the door. We don't have the ability to do that. Very few places are doing that in the country. We're leaving it up to personal responsibility F there's a flagrant disregard for public safety, then I have the ability to close a restaurant if it's serving -- if it's endangering the public. I can't imagine that happening because there's a lot of tourists in town. It's going to be difficult. Very anxiety producing for a lot of people. This virus seems to be seasonal so if we're lucky, our large tourist season is at a time where it seems like the viral prevalence throughout our country is lower. We are seeing significant outbreaks in other parts of the country, even down south where it's awful hot. It's not just like the flu, with flu season, but we fully expect in the fall and the winter to see a lot more cases. Just like anything. If we can predict how much our community and our County would be affected, this summer and the fall, things would be easier. We have to prepare in such a way that we're prepared for the worst case scenario. It's easier to see worst case scenario if we look at other

parts of the country, not after. We've been in this bubble in Montana.

To think that our state of very few infections will continue is a fallacy, really.

We have seen quite a few new cases in Montana at this point. We have had for so long one or two hospitalizations in the state now I think we're up to 7 hospitalizations.

That's a number you should pay attention.

We're creating a dashboard, those numbers will be available. When you look at hospitalizations, you can always bank on about 15% of people who get this virus will end up in the hospital, which gives you an idea of how much infection is in your area.

>> I think we have a question about the need for masks continuing, or not.

Can you address that.

>> DR. GEORGE: I will.

As time goes on we get smarter. One thing we're getting smarter about is the efficacy of masking.

I saw percentages lately without a mask in a certain amount of time in closer than six feet from someone, 20% to 25% chance of passing the virus.

With the mask it's down to 3%. They're very effective, more than we thought.

That is borne out by hospitals have always used masks and dentists use mask, doctors use masks, they're very effective.

I encourage people to use masks going into restaurants, bars, you can't use the mask when you're eating.

But grocery stores, around a lot of people, it's important, it keeps the spread of the virus around.

It's become a statement, political statement when you

have a mask I believe this, when you don't have a mask you believe that.

Don't fall into that line of thinking, please.

It's just a public health recommendation that makes a lot of sense with this specific virus.

>> A question about, clarification on an earlier question, somebody is wanting to go to another state that require as negative test to be exempt from their quarantine.

Can we get that kind of documentation from this testing event.

>> DR. GEORGE: I don't know why not.

It's interesting, because it's just showing that moment of time they have the test they likely did not have the virus.

But we could provide that.

>> And how can somebody know about getting that?

>> DR. GEORGE: Call public health, we can generate a letter.

>> Just looking for additional questions.

Have you seen any?

We have one can a business require customers to wear a mask to do business in their store?

>> DR. GEORGE: Yes, they can, it's their store and they can do that.

It's been tested in other places throughout the country.

Some people get angry coming into the store, they don't understand that that mask is not for the person wearing the mask it's for everybody else.

But they can require that.

>> We're going to give it a second for things to come through.

>> JASON: Quick reminder, our community testing here in Red Lodge is the Red Lodge high school Friday and Saturday,

tomorrow and the day after,
starting at 9:00 and ending at
3:00 both days, Friday and
Saturday.

If you have any questions on
that or you forget that
information, just like
everything else, around
Covid-19, it's available on our
website, CarbonAlert.org.

>> Got some people appreciative
of arranging the testing.
Hopefully will have a good
turnout and be able to get a
good base line information about
what we have got in our
community right now.

As we're waiting for last few
questions coming in, I will
remind people we're doing
Facebook live every other
Thursday unless something comes
up, or until we don't need to do
this any more.

Of course we will be providing
information in our usual chance,
CarbonAlert.org, via Facebook
and Instagram, and this event,
information, you will be able to
find out in the newspaper as
well as FM99 the mountain and
our other media partners.

If you do have additional
questions after this event
please feel free to send them to
us.

Not seeing any additional
questions in the feed.

>> JASON: With that I'd like to
thank everyone for tuning in
today and we hope to see you
either Friday or Saturday at the
community testing event.

Thank you very much.