



COUNTY OF LAKE
Special Districts Administration
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PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Recent Testing for SARS Cov2 (COVID-19) in Lake County's Sewer Treatment Plants

LAKE COUNTY, CA (April 20, 2020) – As reported Friday, April 17, Special Districts has been working with an agency called Biobot to test raw sewage for the presence of SARS COV2 (The virus that causes COVID-19). The virus is shed in the stools of infected people, and its presence in the raw sewage would indicate cases in the county.

We are testing weekly. The first two test results taken 3/21/2020 and 4/1/2020 were negative at all four treatment plants managed by Special Districts. The results from the test taken on 4/8/2020 did test positive at all four treatment plants (Middletown, Kelseyville, NW Regional and SE Regional systems).

In a follow-up call with Biobot, we learned they have researched fecal stools of COVID-19 patients at a Boston hospital, and found the virus does not shed consistently in all patients. Some shed more one day, less the next and more the third day. Also, some shed the virus in stools for a few days, while others shed it up to two weeks.

Because of these variables, it is not possible to know the number of cases in the county by detections. This tool is most useful as an indicator of whether cases are increasing or decreasing. By continuing the testing, it will also become a valuable tool to gauge COVID-19 activity when we open the economy back up.

All four plants had estimated cases at less than 1% of catchment so the numbers are relatively small. The date of this test does coincide with the 6 confirmed cases in the County.

Some are worried about danger from the raw sewage. Raw sewage has MANY contaminants that are hazardous. This is why our staff must always take precautions and sewer spills are always considered an extreme emergency. Although staff will continue to treat all raw sewage as hazardous, it is believed the virus is killed by the amount of detergent and bleach present in raw sewage.

Some have also expressed concern about water supplies.

Sewer and Water are not related, and what is in the raw sewage at the treatment plant has nothing to do with any public water system. Also, it has been proven this virus will not survive the treatment process of public water systems.

Other concerns have regarded the lake.

Public sewer systems do not discharge into the lake, so these findings do not affect Clear Lake.

For Lake County-specific Coronavirus information, please continue to visit the Lake County Health Services Department's website, <http://health.co.lake.ca.us>. The Lake County

Coronavirus Response Hub has additional valuable resources: <https://lake-co-ca-coronavirus-response-lakecoca.hub.arcgis.com/>

If you still have questions, send an email request:
MHOAC@lakecountyca.gov.

You can also call during Public Health's COVID-19 information line during business hours, at:
707-263-8174

Special Districts Administration can be reached at 707-263-0119.

Thank you for respecting and protecting your neighbors, and continuing to:

Stay Informed. Stay Safe. **Stay HOME.**