



CORONAVIRUS

Sacramento announces free coronavirus drive-through testing for all, no symptoms required

BY TONY BIZJAK

MAY 06, 2020 09:04 AM, UPDATED 8 HOURS 48 MINUTES AGO



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Sacramento County health officers on Wednesday announced the private drive-through coronavirus testing site at Cal Expo is now accepting all comers for free tests, regardless of whether they have symptoms or not.

The site, operated by the county along with the Verily research company, has been conducting appointment-only tests at the Expo grounds for six weeks for Sacramento County residents age 18 or older.

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People who want to take a test at the site still must fill out a form at the [Verily website](#) and obtain an appointment time. As of Wednesday afternoon, appointment bookings were two days out at the Sacramento site. That site is open Monday through Friday. Monday appointments can be made after 7 p.m. on the preceding Friday.

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Participants remain in their cars. A healthcare employee takes a swab sample from the person's nose. The process takes about 10 minutes.

Numerous Sacramento residents have complained that the system will not give them an appointment if they had previously gone on the website and been deemed ineligible based on their symptoms at the time. When asked about this Wednesday, a spokeswoman for Verily said the company is reprogramming the website so that it will no longer automatically reject those applicants.

“We expect that the option to rescreen on our website will be fully available by the end of next week to anyone who has screened before, if they are past the three-day window after their first screen,” spokeswoman Rachel Ford Hutman wrote. “This is being rolled out in phases due to the volume of people who have taken our screener – over 200,000 people (for facilities statewide). For the sake of appointment availability and website stability, this needs to be approached in phases.”

Verily sends the swabs to a lab and those who tested are informed within five days of the results. As of this week, some were receiving emails the next day with their results.

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Notably, as the number of new cases in Sacramento has shrunk, the Cal Expo testing site has been working at less than capacity. That has prompted the site to lower the eligibility threshold.

County officials say the site is not intended for people with severe COVID-19 symptoms, such as severe cough, severe shortness of breath, severe fever, or other symptoms that may need immediate medical care.

The Verily site recently saw a reduction in the number of people making and showing up for appointments.

Up to 350 people can be processed every day, but on average, only about 250 people actually were driving up recently, said Erica Havey, a registered nurse with Sacramento County who's been collecting samples at Cal Expo. That's even with the county and Verily overbooking by about 30 percent.

"We're essentially wasting this precious commodity that we have," said county spokeswoman Janna Haynes. "The more people that need to be tested that can come through here the better."

Sacramento Bee reporter Alexandra Yoon-Hendricks contributed to this report.



TONY BIZJAK

916-321-1059

Tony Bizjak has been reporting for The Bee for 30 years. He covers transportation, housing and development and previously was the paper's City Hall beat reporter.

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Only can handle about 500 a day. At that rate it will take about 55 years to test everyone in the county. Instead of sending out wifi buses to neighborhoods, they should send out 100's of testing buses around the county.

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sudenym22 11 hours ago

The Bee announces free COVID-19 testing for anyone who wants one. Fantastic! However, this story has all the honesty of Governor Newsome’s gushing over the generosity of the Sacramento Kings offering Arco Arena to house those inflicted with the virus, leaving out the minor detail that taxpayers will be paying \$500,000 per month for a minimum of three months for this “donation”. A prior Bee article informed us that Verily had been charging the State an average of about \$340 per test. In phase two of this testing the cost is projected to drop to around \$127/test. “Free” services are costing taxpayers dearly.

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jonb 12 hours ago

One drives through and gives a sample then stops at the store and is exposed by an infected person. Several days later you have the virus. Several days after that your negative test results show up. What is the purpose? For one moment in time you were negative. What is the value of this? Bragging rights?

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BUSINESS & REAL ESTATE

California regulators descend on Yuba and Sutter as coronavirus battle with Newsom heats up

BY TONY BIZJAK AND ROSALIO AHUMADA

MAY 06, 2020 02:33 PM, UPDATED 2 HOURS 18 MINUTES AGO



Regulators with Alcoholic Beverage Control told restaurants in Yuba and Sutter counties to shut down, as California Gov. Gavin Newsom’s stay-at-home order isn’t yet allowing those businesses to reopen.

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