

September 23, 2020

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact: Michelle Corson, 661-868-0288

More residents needed for COVID-19 testing to slow the spread and move into the next tier

Kern County residents are needed for coronavirus testing to continue to help slow the spread of coronavirus, as well as help the county move out of the state's most restrictive purple tier.

Coronavirus tests for active infections slows the spread of the disease by identifying infected individuals who can then be isolated as well as their close contacts. This process disrupts the disease, slows the spread of the disease and preserves space in our acute care hospitals. Additionally, increased testing supports moving into a less restrictive level of the state's reopening plan (red tier) that will allow more businesses, as well as schools and places of worship to reopen indoors.

The county is currently assigned to the purple tier, where the COVID-19 virus is considered widespread. Based on the state's criteria, increased testing will result in a lower case rate, allowing the move to the red tier where the virus spread is considered substantial. Counties are placed within tiers because of their daily case rate (must be lower than seven new cases per 100,000 population) and positivity rate (lower than 8 percent). Additionally, the case rate criteria is artificially increased if a County's rate of testing is less than the State's median test rate.

Kern County has achieved the positivity rate that will allow it to move to the red tier (6.5 percent), however, the case rate, because of the artificial offset, remains higher than the state's requirement. Kern County's unadjusted case rate is 6.3; however, because of the artificial offset, was reported as 7.2.

"Our community has made great progress in slowing the spread of the disease and more testing will help us continue to disrupt the spread of the virus and reopen our economy," said Matt Constantine, Director of Kern County Public Health Services Department.

Residents are urged to continue practicing healthy habits such as hand washing, physical distancing and wearing a face covering when in public.

There are nine free County or State testing sites spread throughout Kern County, both walk-in and drive-up services. To find locations and make an appointment, go online to kerncounty.com or call 211. Additionally, most local healthcare providers are also providing testing. Some of those providers include Omni, Clinica Sierra Vista, and Kaiser and most urgent cares.

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