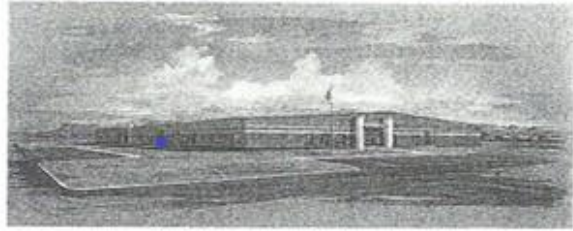




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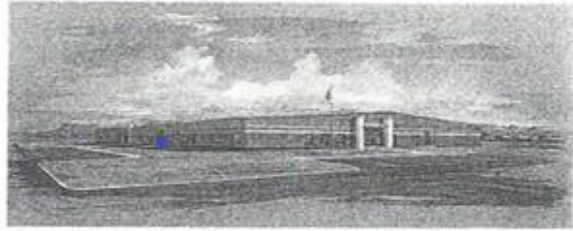
April 15, 2020

I wanted to give some information out and maybe give some clarifications on our positive cases of the COVID-19. Pecos County does not have a designated health officer for the county, so the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) out of El Paso covers this area. They have an Epidemiologist (Epi) to investigate all cases that are confirmed either at the health lab in El Paso or from private labs. All labs are overwhelmed at this time, in trying to get the results that are being submitted. So, therefore the hospitals or doctor's offices have no control on getting these results in a timely manner. There are rapid test kits that may become available for some offices. The rapid test kits only give us a preliminary result but then must be sent off to the lab for confirmation. When a subject is tested for the COVID-19, they are advised to self-quarantine at home until the results come back from the lab. If a test comes back positive, the judge or myself are notified immediately from the facility that took the test. We are only given limited information about the person that is positive at the time. Due to HIPAA law there is some red tape and medical clearance that we, as County/City Officials must get before we can investigate someone's medical background. This is why the State Epi will investigate the cases for us because they have the authority to conduct the investigations quicker. They will contact the person that is positive and ask them several questions. Where they have been, who have they been in contact with, and etc. The epi will then contact the other people that may have been in contact with to possibly get tested or to contact their doctor for pre-cautionary reasons. Sometimes the epi will ask the person to help by contacting the people to see their doctor. If the epi can determine the source of the contraction, they will let us know if it was from traveling, close association with another case, or maybe an unknown source. It is hard to determine where the person could have contracted from since this is all new to everyone and we cannot speculate on the reasoning without facts. Sometimes it does take epi time to get all the facts and notifying the correct people who could have been exposed.

Currently as of this morning on April 15, 2020, we have five confirmed cases for Pecos County. There is some confusion about the two from El Paso County. A person has the right to be tested anywhere in the United States. The male chose to be tested here at the hospital since he was working in Pecos County on April 1st. When the results came back, we did not know where the source of contraction was from until epi determined that the individual is from El Paso County and upon investigation, he may have contracted from El Paso County. That individual decided to self-quarantine here in Pecos County along with two other people who are from El Paso County



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working here. He did not want to go back home to his family and potentially risking other family members. According to State guidelines if a person is from another county and possibly contracted it from another county, then the stat goes to that county regardless of where he is quarantined. The second female that is staying with this individual and has been in quarantined with him, came back positive and is also from El Paso County. Therefore, the stat will also be referred to El Paso County since they are both from El Paso County and once again may have contracted it from that county. It is still our responsibility to monitor these individuals making sure they are self-quarantine at home and following the rules.

All the people that are positive must be tested again close to the end of the quarantine to determine if they have recovered from the virus before they can be released. Everyone so far has been following the rules and law enforcement has spent many hours investigating allegations of someone being out in public and have all been unfounded when they were told by their doctor to quarantine.

I know a lot of people want to know who the person is, but we cannot release that information. Due to HIPAA rules, it is not proper to bring attention to those individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19. Some people do not even know that they have the virus because they were not showing any symptoms. CDC has stated that some people may not even show the symptoms and is why they are asking everyone to follow the recommendations of preventing the spread. If we all would follow the guidelines, then maybe this will be over soon, but if we don't then it could last longer, and more lives could be lost.

I get daily updates from the all the hospitals, and clinics in Pecos County every morning and compile the stats. The City of Fort Stockton then posts the stats on their Facebook page of how many were tested, negative, pending, confirmed, and recovered. This information is also provided to the pioneer also. The DSHS dashboard only posts the confirmed cases per county as it is updated.

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessie Dominguez".

Jessie Dominguez  
Pecos County Emergency Management Coordinator