



Media Information:

For immediate release:

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Yellowstone County records 226th COVID-19 death

Billings, MT – A review of death records provided to RiverStone Health late last week has concluded that a substantial number of COVID-19 related deaths of Yellowstone County residents had not previously been reported to county public health officials.

After completing the review, RiverStone Health has determined that 47 additional Yellowstone County residents died of COVID-19 related illness, according to their death certificates. These deaths occurred between September 3, 2020, and January 13, 2021. These deaths are reflected on the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) state COVID-19 tracking map today, February 3. Including these 47 deaths, Yellowstone County has lost 226 residents to the pandemic.

“The reconciliation of data is a normal part of ensuring accuracy in public health information,” said John Felton, RiverStone Health president and CEO and Yellowstone County health officer. “The verification of pandemic information is a much bigger job than usual public health reconciliation work because of the large number of COVID-19 cases and deaths.”

A death isn't counted as COVID-19 related, unless that is a cause cited by the healthcare provider who signed the death certificate. Most of the 47 death reports that were delayed occurred outside of hospitals in private homes, nursing homes or assisted living facilities. Even if the deceased had tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19, the death could not be listed as COVID-19 related until a physician or other licensed medical provider made the cause of death determination for the death certificate.

RiverStone Health has contacted officials responsible for notifying public health of deaths caused by infectious diseases. Yellowstone County public health professionals are working with the county registrar to prevent future delays in accurate, timely reporting of COVID-19 related deaths.

Also last week, RiverStone Health was notified that 209 positive COVID-19 tests for Yellowstone County residents dating back to October had not previously been reported to DPHHS. These positive tests were resulted at a private lab. The reporting delay involved some, but not all, results

from this lab during that time period. The delayed positive tests were added to Yellowstone County's case count on the state map last week.

The breakdown in communication appears to have been with an electronic clearinghouse that was used to transmit the private lab's test results to DPHHS. Steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence of this reporting delay.

"Not including the delayed reports of 209 people testing positive, Yellowstone County's case numbers continue to trend down from the numbers we saw in November and December," Felton said. "Most cases for which reporting was delayed are now closed."

The COVID-19 related deaths that RiverStone Health reported today all occurred in Yellowstone County and involved Yellowstone County residents.

On September 3, a woman age 100 or older died at an assisted living facility.
On September 15, a woman in her 90s died at a nursing home.
On September 18, a man in his 70s died at a hospital.
On September 25, a woman in her 80s died at a nursing home.
On September 26, a man in his 80s died at a nursing home.
On September 30, a woman in her 90s died at a nursing home.
On October 10, a woman in her 80s died at a nursing home.
On October 14, a woman in her 90s died at an assisted living facility.
On October 17, a woman in her 70s died at a hospital.
On October 23, a woman in her 80s died at an assisted living facility.
On October 30, a woman in her 80s died at home.
On October 31, a man in his 90s died at home.
On November 5, a woman in her 90s died at an assisted living facility.
On November 8, a man in his 70s died at a hospital.
On November 8, a man in his 70s died at home.
On November 10, a woman in her 90s died at an assisted living facility.
On November 12, a man in his 70s died at a hospital.
On November 13, a man in his 80s died at home.
On November 14, a man in his 90s died at a nursing home.
On November 17, a man in his 80s died at a nursing home.
On November 17, a woman in her 50s died at home.
On November 18, a woman in her 90s died at a nursing home.
On November 20, a woman in her 50s died at home.
On November 20, a woman in her 60s died at a hospital.
On November 21, a woman in her 40s died at a nursing home.
On November 22, a man in his 50s died at a nursing home.
On November 26, two women in their 90s died in their homes.
On November 26, a woman in her 90s died at a nursing home.
On November 26, a woman in her 70s died at a nursing home.
On November 27, a woman in her 90s died at a nursing home.
On December 4, a woman age 100 or older died at a nursing home.
On December 5, a woman in her 90s died at a nursing home.
On December 9, a woman in her 60s died at an independent living facility.
On December 12, a woman in her 90s died at an assisted living facility.

On December 12, a man in his 80s died at an assisted living facility.
On December 12, a man in his 70s died at a hospital.
On December 14, a woman in her 70s died at an assisted living facility.
On December 17, a woman in her 60s died at a nursing home.
On December 21, a woman in her 80s died at an assisted living facility.
On December 22, a man in his 80s died at an assisted living facility.
On January 3, a woman in her 80s died at an assisted living facility.
On January 9, a woman in her 60s died at a nursing home.
On January 10, a woman in her 60s died at a hospital.
On January 10, a woman in her 80s died at a nursing home.
On January 11, a woman in her 60s died at home.
On January 13, a woman in her 90s died at a nursing home.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit covid.riverstonehealth.org.

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