



**News Release**

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For Immediate Release

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**Lee House Cluster Grows – 5 Additional Cases Identified Following Testing Event**

**Elizabethtown, NY.** Essex County Health Department is reporting 5 additional cases associated with the initial cluster of COVID-19 cases in residents of the Lee House Apartments in Port Henry; town of Moriah. This brings the total cases to 9. This cluster includes people that live within and outside the Lee House Apartments.

Yesterday, the ECHD and staff from the Essex County Office of Emergency Services offered a testing event from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. near the Lee House Apartments for residents and individuals known to be or potentially exposed. The five additional cases were identified from 38 individuals swabbed, with the NYS Wadsworth Laboratory processing and reporting results to the health department in under 24 hours.

Two additional cases unrelated to the Lee House cluster were also reported to ECHD on Friday.

“The Health Department has spoken with all new cases today to issue isolation orders, conduct case investigations, and determine contacts that might be at risk of exposure,” stated Linda Beers, Director of Public Health for the department.

“This uptick in cases we’re experiencing is not unique to Essex County and is an important reminder of how opportunistic this virus is when we let down our guard,” cautioned Beers. “We’re finding that even smaller, indoor family gatherings, really fuels the spread of this virus. As cold and flu season is upon us, it’s even more important than ever to closely follow mask wearing, social distancing, handwashing, and gathering guidelines – and get a flu shot,” urged Beers.

Community members have expressed concern about perceived activity at the Lee House Apartments, after the Essex County Board of Supervisors suspended outside visitors to the building this past Sunday. “We want to remind the community that many of the residents are not under an isolation or quarantine order based on our assessment and are free to come and go from the building. There are also several residents who receive essential medical and/or personal services, so there will still be some traffic in and out of the apartments,” Beers noted.

The Essex County Health Department is working closely with other county and regional departments and agencies, including Mountain Lake Services, Essex County Department of Social Services, Office for the Aging, Office of Emergency Services, North County Home Services, Fort Hudson Health System, and the Housing Assistance Program of Essex County to safely meet the needs of every Lee House resident, conduct well checks, deliver food, medication, and supplies, and conduct cleaning and sanitization for mitigation and containment purposes.

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