The Monterey County Public Health Lab has special containment facilities and lab equipment to handle highly infectious microbes.

Public Health Lab Aiding Fight Against Coronavirus

Monterey County is fortunate not to have a local case of the new coronavirus yet, but that doesn’t mean we haven’t joined the fight against this global virus. In fact, the Health Department’s Public Health Laboratory is gearing up to test for the virus and has already assisted in sending virus samples to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

“When an unknown biological agent like the new coronavirus emerges as a threat to our nation’s health, the CDC and local public health departments coordinate resources to control and manage spread of the disease,” explains Dr. Donna Ferguson, PhD., Health Lab Director.
Ferguson says while the CDC was developing a new test method for this new virus, laboratory staff worked with Health Department epidemiologists, public health nurses and local hospitals to obtain specimens for testing at the CDC as well as assisting San Benito County Health Officials with sending specimens for testing. Monterey County Public Health Lab plays a critical role on the Central Coast by having trained public health microbiologists and specialized biosafety suites to handle and contain highly pathogenic organisms. Public Health Lab staff are trained to pack and ship these organisms safely to the CDC.

Our local health lab is also on track to be able to test for the virus in a few weeks once the CDC gives approval. When that happens, local medical providers will be able to get test results in a few hours instead of a few days. The CDC will still confirm any positive results.

While news of this new virus is concerning, the experts at the Health Department remind us that most of us are at low risk of being exposed to the coronavirus; but influenza - the flu - is circulating widely. The same precautions that protect you from the flu will protect you from coronavirus: wash your hands, clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, stay at least six feet away from sick people and if you are sick, stay home and cover your coughs. And yes, it’s not too late to get a flu shot!

To stay informed about the coronavirus, visit the [Health Department’s 2019 novel coronavirus website](#).
Ceremony Raises Flags at Child Support Services

The flags are flying again at the Department of Child Support Services.

The American and California flags have flown over the building on Moffett Street since DCSS opened its offices there in 1998. Unfortunately, in December of last year, vandals damaged the flag poles and stole those flags.

While the vandals have not been caught, DCSS worked with a local vendor who had the specialized equipment to reach the maximum height of the poles in order to repair them and replace the flags.

When it was time to raise the flags, staff gathered outside the building for a special ceremony on Monday, February 3rd. The Soledad High School Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) really helped make the occasion special, not only presenting the colors and raising the flags but singing the national anthem.
Super Bowl Brings Out Fan Fever

While it was a crushing defeat for the San Francisco 49ers and fans, the Friday before Super Bowl Sunday last week brought out a lot of team spirit throughout the County. Showing their love for the game (and the ‘home’ team in many places), many departments kept operations going with a little fan flair - wearing jerseys of favorite teams and players and gathering for some food and fun to mark the occasion.

Check out the County sports spirit!

Health Department

If you think there was a cure for fan fever at the Health Department - no way, in fact it was contagious in the Department’s many bureaus, programs and clinics facilities.
Animal Services

Animal Services celebrated the big game with a super deal designed to bring pets and people together. The shelter held a Super Bowl Saturday on February 2nd. For those who came in wearing their favorite team colors and happened to find a ‘fur-ever’ friend, the adoption fee was just $49.
Child Support Services

Fans at Child Support Services gathered for fun and a potluck with staff showcasing jerseys from a lot of favorite teams.

Social Services

The theme at the Social Services staff get together to rally for the big game was ‘Game Time,’ down to table decorations and fan food.
County Administrative Office

CAO staff took a break for snacks and games including Super Bowl trivia.