



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Defiance County General Health District COVID-19**

**OCTOBER 26, 2020:** The Defiance County General Health District (DCGHD) is reporting continued increase in COVID-19 cases in Defiance County. The recent increase has been linked to widespread community transmission, a work related outbreak, and long-term care facility outbreaks. “Individual Defiance County residents working together have the power to slow the spread COVID-19. We must work together to protect those with underlying medical conditions, our friends, our families and our healthcare capacity,” said Defiance County Health Commissioner, Jamie Gerken.

In a new effort to help slow the spread of COVID-19, a network across Ohio is studying samples of wastewater to look for the presence of fragments from the virus that causes the COVID-19 disease. An upward trend (sustained increase over a 12-day period) of viral gene copies has been detected in the Defiance City sewer shed, which serves a population of 19,900 people.

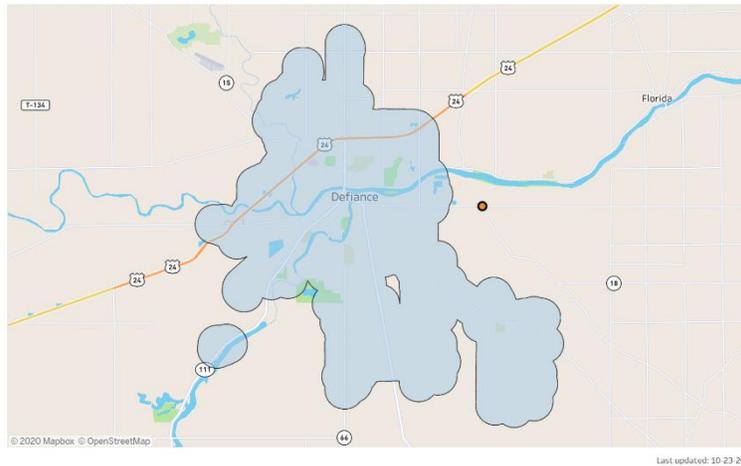
This trend is an early indicator that cases of COVID-19 in the community may be increasing. Residents should be on alert and remain vigilant in their efforts to social distance, wear face coverings, and adhere to prevention efforts such as frequent hand-washing.

This emerging information is being used by DCGHD in conjunction with our community case numbers and other COVID-19-related data to further inform decisions as we respond to the pandemic. DCGHD is alerting healthcare providers, nursing homes, and other shared-living facilities to be prepared for a potential increase in cases.

The increase of COVID-19 cases in communities is typically tracked by testing people with symptoms, an indicator that lags behind the actual spread of the disease. However, research has shown that non-infectious RNA (ribonucleic acid) from the virus that causes COVID-19 can be detected in wastewater as many as three to seven days before those infections lead to increases in case counts or hospitalizations. This means that monitoring raw wastewater in sewage collection systems can provide an early warning of disease increase in a community.

When interpreting this specific viral data in wastewater, it is only appropriate to monitor and observe the trends of viral gene copies detected in a community over time, not individual readings themselves. From three sustained samples collected over a 12-day period at the Defiance Water Pollution Control sewer-shed show a **100-fold increase in viral load (from 8,900 MGC to 1,300,000 MGC throughout the sampling period).**

Wastewater Treatment Plant Locations and Boundaries



The Ohio Coronavirus Wastewater Monitoring Network is a collaboration between the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), the Ohio Water Resources Center (Ohio WRC) at The Ohio State University, and other participating universities, including The University of Toledo, Kent State University, and The University of Akron.

Additional information on wastewater monitoring can be found at:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/dashboards/wastewater>

**Stay Informed:**

- DCGHD website: <http://defiancecohealth.org/coronavirus/>
- Ohio Department of Health website: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov>

**Prevent the spread:**

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer only if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Practice social distancing by avoiding gatherings and remaining 6ft from others.
- Avoid contact with sick people.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Wear a cloth facial covering while in public.
- Stay home if you are sick.

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