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Coronavirus: Outbreak at Walnut Creek nursing home leaves 12 dead, 130 infected

Anna Bauman

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Twelve residents have died and 130 people have been infected with the coronavirus at a Walnut Creek nursing home, state health officials said Monday.

Ninety-two residents and 38 health care workers at Manor Care Health Services-Tice Valley tested positive for the coronavirus as of Sunday, according to data from the

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California Department of Public Health. There were at least 25 active cases among residents.

Many of the cases were asymptomatic and more than 50 people — 27 residents and 26 staff — have recovered, said Julie Beckert, assistant vice president of marketing communications for HCR Manor Care. The whole facility has been tested.



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Data provided by state health officials paint a picture of how the virus spread gradually through the facility in the past month.

The first resident tested positive June 18. Four days later, 32 residents and at least one staff member were infected. The numbers more than doubled in the next week and continued climbing in the following weeks as the virus continued to spread.

The first resident died June 25. Three weeks later, 12 residents were dead, according to state data.

The 120-bed facility offers short-term care, long-term care and outpatient rehabilitation options, according to its website.

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The facility has a record of health violations, state records show. Medicare gave the facility a four-star, or above average, rating.

During an April 2019 recertification inspection, officials found that the facility failed to meet federal and state requirements for providing a safe and clean environment, regularly evaluating and training nurse aides, storing food and kitchen items properly, and following infection control measures, according to state records.

In one instance, an inspector found soiled clothes, a dirty commode bucket and a toilet plunger with brown stains left in a bathroom. In another recorded incident, a housekeeper failed to remove personal protective equipment before leaving the room of a patient with a highly communicable disease.

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Another housekeeper did not sanitize cleaning equipment before taking it out of an isolation room, according to the inspection report. Nurses did not sanitize a blood pressure cuff or pulse oximeter after using them on patients, the report said.

Deaths in long-term care facilities account for more than a third of California's COVID-19 deaths. The virus spreads in close quarters, most often claiming vulnerable victims who are elderly or have pre-existing conditions.

There have been 2,953 COVID-19 deaths at 1,223 skilled nursing facilities in California since the beginning of the pandemic, state data show. More than 16,700 residents and 11,800 health care workers have been infected.

At the Walnut Creek facility, employees must self-quarantine after testing positive, Beckert said. Staff wear personal protective equipment, follow hygiene protocols and are screened for COVID-19 symptoms, she said.

In response to the pandemic, the facility implemented regular patient temperature checks, increased cleaning, educated staff regarding personal protective equipment and created an airborne isolation unit for high risk patients, Beckert said. Manor Care is working with health officials and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, she added.

Contra Costa County health officials referred questions to the state health department. A state health representative said the department would not provide information beyond what is available in its database.









The outbreak in Walnut Creek is among the deadliest to hit East Bay skilled nursing homes. Another Contra Costa County outbreak occurred at San Miguel Villa in Concord, where 20 residents died and 82 people were infected.

In Alameda County, 19 residents died in a coronavirus outbreak at Gateway Care and Rehabilitation Center in Hayward.






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