

Harrison/St. Michaels/CHI COVID 19 Post-Outbreak Update

Insufficient Safety at CHI/Harrison/St. Michaels

Healthcare workers at Harrison/St. Michael's have been advocating for adequate PPE and safety protocols since March. They have sent letters, done actions inside the hospital as well as a caravan through Bremerton and Silverdale, stood on over passes and spoke out continuously for worker and patient safety. Please see attached timeline of all they have done.

Several weeks after the COVID 19 outbreak at Harrison/St. Michael's Hospital in early August, the WA Department of Health and Labor & Industries launched investigations. On August 31st, UFCW 21 organized a listening session heads of DoH, L&I and Kitsap Health Department and over 100 workers from the Bremerton hospital. Over three hours, healthcare workers detailed lack of PPE and protection, lack of notification about the outbreak, waiting upwards of 5 days to get test results, being asked to work if they were asymptomatic and themselves and loved ones getting sick and at least one dying of COVID 19 due to this outbreak.

State Findings & Alert

In September, DOH and L&I jointly issued a **Hazard Alert for Preventing the spread of COVID-19 in Healthcare Workers and Patients**. This clarifies and specifies what hospitals must do to keep workers and patients safe, and addresses multiple specific concerns that Harrison workers raised with these agencies. We believe the courage of Harrison workers in speaking out will keep health care workers and patients around the state safer by making it much more clear to hospital management what is required for a safe healthcare workplace.

Find a link to the hazard alert here: <https://www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/preventing-injuries-illnesses/hazardalerts/HazardAlertCOVIDHealthCare.pdf>

The alert includes requirements such as:

- a. Training for ALL staff before they work in any facility on site-specific COVID-19 procedures, infection control procedures, how to report potential exposures, and safe PPE usage
- b. Masks replaced daily at the beginning of each shift and immediately upon request if damaged or soiled, no multiple-shift use of disposable respirators/masks
- c. Hospitals must have an effective system to track respirator training and testing that ensures every employee is supplied with appropriate respiratory protection
- d. Adequate marking of COVID-positive and suspected-COVID patients for everyone's safety
- e. Adequate social distancing and masking throughout the hospital for all staff, patients, visitors
- f. (and much more)

New Cases Being Reported

Later in September, UFCW 21 members at Harrison/St. Michael, met with Harrison management to discuss the Alert as well as worker demands around health and safety. Unfortunately, despite promises for changes to happen, just a day after the meeting, new COVID 19 cases were reported by members to the union, however not by management to either workers or their union. Workers also report that PPE that appeared during the DoH and L&I investigations went away just as quickly, and the testing they were doing for a couple of weeks stopped as well.

UFCW 21 members continue to advocate for hospital management to commitment to real transparency so we can work together to keep workers and patients safe. So far these demands have not been met.

Demands:

- a. Rapid testing for all workers (*workers still report testing times taking too long*)
- b. Complying with our existing agreement for 8-hour notification of any exposure (*we believe workers are not always notified within 8 hours and some are told that what they believe is an exposure to a COVID patient doesn't count as an exposure*)
- c. Paid administrative leave during the full length of any quarantine and while waiting for test results (*this is still a mixed bag but seems to be improving in some ways*)
- d. Adequate PPE for all workers (*this improved after L&I and DOH visited the hospital but is not nearly what it should be*)
- e. Maintaining safe staffing levels even during this outbreak (*staffing levels continue to be problematic*)
- f. Hazard pay (*there has been no movement on hazard pay*)

Community is Vital

Community support is vital to make CHI understand that they continue to put workers' and patients' lives at risk. We need a sustained and visible commitment to community safety, listening to workers, complying with all our agreements and all state guidelines.