



Laura Belin <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com>

"rapid response team" to Iowa Select?

Ekstrand, Sarah <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov>
To: Laura Belin <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com>

Wed, Apr 28, 2021 at 4:56 PM

Hi Laura,

Your questions and my responses below in bold.

National Beef/Iowa Premium is listed as having a strike team and test supplies sent. I understood that to mean that the strike team was on site April 16 and 17, and test supplies were sent May 25. Please confirm that my interpretation of the table is correct. **Yes, that's my understanding.**

I want to make sure I understand: were Iowa National Guard personnel involved in every testing event listed here as a "strike team"? I'm asking because previous reporting about the July 13 testing at Iowa Select Farms had described that as a "rapid-response state team." <https://apnews.com/article/public-health-iowa-kim-reynolds-des-moines-coronavirus-pandemic-639cc1c485701ce6eef074a34577d8e2>. If the Iowa National Guard was involved only in the nine strike team visits you had previously disclosed in January, who conducted the testing during the other strike team events listed here? **The term "strike team" means that support was sent to that location for collecting specimens for COVID testing. The individuals who actually implemented the testing were licensed health care providers consisting of DHS, IDPH staff and IDPH temp staff and volunteer nurses. The responsibility of the National Guard was transporting supplies, directing traffic flow and flow of persons through the test site only, not actual collection of tests.**

Bayer seems to have several Iowa locations. Which facility received the strike team visit on June 4? **The one in Iowa County.**

West Liberty Foods has locations in West Liberty and Mount Pleasant. Which facility received the strike team visit on April 30 and May 1, and which one on June 5? **Muscatine County - 4/30 and 5/1, Henry County on 6/5.**

Finally, where you have noted "Test Iowa link," does that mean IDPH arranged to have some Test Iowa mobile site with dedicated hours for a certain company's workforce? Or was it up to the companies to get individual employees scheduled through a local Test Iowa site? Trying to understand what the "link" was here. **When a business was provided a URL, specimens were collected for testing at a Test Iowa Drive through Site, persons employed at that business were scheduled through the test IA URL and given certain hours of available testing times at the drive through.**

I realized that Hormel Dubuque and Progressive Processing Dubuque are listed separately on the table you sent. Aren't those the same facility? <https://www.hormelfoods.com/newsroom/press-releases/hormel-foods-celebrates-grand-opening-of-state-of-the-art-production-facility-in-dubuque-iowa/>. Or is there another Hormel plant in Dubuque in addition to the Progressive Processing one? **I believe that this was added to the list twice. My understanding was that there was only one instance where supplies were sent to this location.**

Finally Laura, as I shared earlier this week, since there were numerous staff involved in the response last year, there was not one source for this information. What I have provided to you is the result of hours of work researching and compiling information to create a specific document, and respond to your follow up inquiries. As we are still very much engaged in pandemic response, that is where we need to focus time and resources, so I will not provide responses to additional inquiries on this topic.

Thank you,
Sarah Ekstrand

Public Information Officer, Iowa Department of Public Health
515.401.7988
321 E. 12th Street Des Moines, IA 50319
sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov



On Wed, Apr 28, 2021 at 1:27 PM Ekstrand, Sarah <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov> wrote:

Hi Laura,

I'm doing my best to get your follow up questions answered as quickly as possible, as well as responding to other inquiries. I hope to have responses to you soon.

Thank you,
Sarah Ekstrand
Public Information Officer, Iowa Department of Public Health
515.401.7988
321 E. 12th Street Des Moines, IA 50319
sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov



On Wed, Apr 28, 2021 at 9:44 AM Laura Belin <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com> wrote:

Sarah, how's it going on answering these questions?

I realized that Hormel Dubuque and Progressive Processing Dubuque are listed separately on the table you sent. Aren't those the same facility?

<https://www.hormelfoods.com/newsroom/press-releases/hormel-foods-celebrates-grand-opening-of-state-of-the-art-production-facility-in-dubuque-iowa/>

Or is there another Hormel plant in Dubuque in addition to the Progressive Processing one?

On Tue, Apr 27, 2021 at 2:17 PM Laura Belin <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com> wrote:

Thank you. I realize I forgot to ask one more thing. National Beef/Iowa Premium is listed as having a strike team and test supplies sent. I understood that to mean that the strike team was on site April 16 and 17, and test supplies were sent May 25. Please confirm that my interpretation of the table is correct.

On Tue, Apr 27, 2021 at 1:56 PM Ekstrand, Sarah <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov> wrote:

Hi Laura,

I have your questions and I will follow up.

Thank you,
Sarah Ekstrand

Public Information Officer, Iowa Department of Public Health
515.401.7988
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sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov



On Tue, Apr 27, 2021 at 1:50 PM Laura Belin <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com> wrote:

Circling back on this. Why were so many of these strike team visits not listed on the document you sent me in January?

Pat Garrett told Ryan Foley,

“Political support wasn’t a factor, ever,” the governor’s spokesman, Pat Garrett, said Tuesday. “All these decisions are made in conjunction with public health based on the needs of a company that would come to us.”

I am trying to understand the public health criteria used. Was it based on how many positive cases had been identified in a company's workforce? How many did Bayer or Stine Seed have?

My understanding was that Iowa Select Farms had some employees who might have been exposed, but it wasn't clear that they had any confirmed cases among workers at their headquarters at the time the strike team was approved. With only 33 people at their headquarters needing to be tested, why not refer them to Test Iowa? Especially since Test Iowa appointments were more readily available in July than earlier?

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Laura Belin** <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com>
Date: Mon, Apr 26, 2021 at 3:45 PM
Subject: Re: "rapid response team" to Iowa Select?
To: Ekstrand, Sarah <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov>

Thanks, Sarah. This document shows quite a few more "strike team" visits than the document you provided in January. Whereas that document (attached) showed nine strike teams going to businesses and six going to counties to test long-term care workers, this new document indicates the following seventeen strike team visits:

National Beef/Iowa Premium (April 16 and 17)
Tyson Columbus Junction (April 17)
Prestage Eagle Grove (April 20)
Upper Iowa Beef (April 21)
Lynch Livestock (April 22)
Tyson Perry (April 25)
Tyson Waterloo (April 26)
West Liberty Foods (April 30 and May 1)
Perdue Farms Sioux City (May 4)
AgriStar (May 5)
Perdue Farms Sioux Center (May 5)
Stine Seed (May 8)
GMT (May 22)

Northwood Foods (May 29)
Bayer (June 4)
West Liberty Foods (June 5)
Iowa Select Farms (July 13)

I want to make sure I understand: were Iowa National Guard personnel involved in every testing event listed here as a "strike team"? I'm asking because previous reporting about the July 13 testing at Iowa Select Farms had described that as a "rapid-response state team."

<https://apnews.com/article/public-health-iowa-kim-reynolds-des-moines-coronavirus-pandemic-639cc1c485701ce6eef074a34577d8e2>

If the Iowa National Guard was involved only in the nine strike team visits you had previously disclosed in January, who conducted the testing during the other strike team events listed here?

Bayer seems to have several Iowa locations. Which facility received the strike team visit on June 4?

West Liberty Foods has locations in West Liberty and Mount Pleasant. Which facility received the strike team visit on April 30 and May 1, and which one on June 5?

Finally, where you have noted "Test Iowa link," does that mean IDPH arranged to have some Test Iowa mobile site with dedicated hours for a certain company's workforce? Or was it up to the companies to get individual employees scheduled through a local Test Iowa site? Trying to understand what the "link" was here.

Thanks,

Laura

On Mon, Apr 26, 2021 at 3:02 PM Ekstrand, Sarah <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov> wrote:

Hi Laura,

There was not one document with all of the information you requested. I did need to pull from several sources to supply this to you, which is the reason for the delay. You asked specifically about a location receiving a Strike Team on 6/4, I had mislabeled the date for that location, it is now updated.

If there is a field that is labeled "unknown", this means that the state does not have a record of the information. Arrangements in these circumstances were made by a number of different staff who were working on the pandemic response at the time.

Thank you,
Sarah Ekstrand
Public Information Officer, Iowa Department of Public Health
515.401.7988
321 E. 12th Street Des Moines, IA 50319
sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov



On Mon, Apr 26, 2021 at 1:44 PM Laura Belin <laurabelin@bleedingheartland.com> wrote:
Sarah, when can I expect answers to these follow-up questions?

On Fri, Apr 23, 2021 at 4:55 PM Laura Belin <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com> wrote:
Ok, I will hope to receive more information early next week.

On Fri, Apr 23, 2021 at 4:49 PM Ekstrand, Sarah <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov> wrote:
Hi Laura,

I'm sorry, but I am not going to be able to meet your deadline of close of business today, but I will follow up.

Thank you,
Sarah Ekstrand
Public Information Officer, Iowa Department of Public Health
515.401.7988
321 E. 12th Street Des Moines, IA 50319
sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov



On Fri, Apr 23, 2021 at 8:50 AM Laura Belin <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com> wrote:
I will be writing about this soon, so please respond to the questions below by close of business today (April 23).

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Laura Belin** <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com>
Date: Thu, Apr 22, 2021 at 4:05 PM
Subject: Re: "rapid response team" to Iowa Select?
To: Ekstrand, Sarah <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov>, Pat Garrett <pat.garrett@iowa.gov>

Sarah, following up on the information you sent this morning:

1. Why are some companies marked as N/A? Did they request state assistance but end up sourcing COVID-19 testing kits from somewhere else?
2. The list you sent today does not distinguish between companies that received a strike team visit involving the Iowa National Guard, companies that received a "rapid response" team with non-military personnel to conduct tests (like what was sent to Iowa Select in July), and companies that received COVID-19 testing kits only and had to arrange for people to administer them (TPI told me they were in that group).

For 12 weeks, I've been asking for this information.
3. The strike team list you provided in January (attached) had a listing for June 4, but the page you sent today did not list any business receiving tests or testing on that date. Please clarify where a strike team involving the Iowa National Guard was sent on June 4, 2020.
4. It looks like the state mostly stopped providing testing assistance to corporations in early June, which makes sense because Test Iowa was ramping up by that point. Governor Reynolds said at several press conferences that Test Iowa would be a resource for businesses to get their employees tested. Why did IDPH send a rapid response team to Iowa Select Farms

in mid-July? Why not have them use Test Iowa or some other resource for testing their (not very large) workforce at headquarters?

5. Whose decision was it to give Iowa Select Farms the concierge-style service for COVID-19 testing? Did Governor Reynolds make that call, or someone on the IDPH team?

I'm copying Pat Garrett on this message in case he has anything to add.

Thanks,

Laura

On Thu, Apr 22, 2021 at 9:31 AM Ekstrand, Sarah <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov> wrote:
Hi Laura,

This is the most comprehensive record of companies that the state provided COVID-19 testing support for in 2020. Our team provided responsive support to each company that asked for assistance with testing, and no company was denied assistance.

Listed dates do not account for businesses that had multiple days of testing.

Thank you,
Sarah Ekstrand
Public Information Officer, Iowa Department of Public Health
515.401.7988
321 E. 12th Street Des Moines, IA 50319
sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov



On Thu, Apr 22, 2021 at 7:23 AM Laura Belin <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com> wrote:
Sarah, I've been asking about this for 12 weeks. What is going on? The Iowa Public Information Board just heard two complaints against IDPH related to delays in responding to information requests.

I'm not asking for anything complicated. I want to know how many companies received COVID-19 testing kits from the state (and on what dates), and how many companies received not just testing kits but also a "rapid response" team to conduct COVID-19 testing at their workplaces (and on what dates).

Please also confirm that IDPH has not revised information previously provided regarding nine companies that received "strike team" visits involving the Iowa National Guard, on April 23 (Tyson Perry), April 24 (Tyson Waterloo), May 5 (media reports indicated that was Agristar), May 4 and 5 (Perdue), May 8, May 22 (media reports indicated that was GMT), May 29, June 4, and June 5.

Thank you in advance,

Laura

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From: **Ekstrand, Sarah** <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov>
Date: Mon, Apr 12, 2021 at 5:11 PM
Subject: Re: "rapid response team" to Iowa Select?
To: Laura Belin <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com>

Hi Laura,

I'm sorry for the delay. I am working on your request.

Thank you,
Sarah Ekstrand
Public Information Officer, Iowa Department of Public Health
515.401.7988
321 E. 12th Street Des Moines, IA 50319
sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov



On Mon, Apr 12, 2021 at 12:04 PM Laura Belin <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com> wrote:

Sarah, I'm still asking for this information. Why is it taking so long to compile and provide a list showing how many Iowa companies received COVID-19 testing kits from the state (with dates those supplies were sent), and how many Iowa companies received rapid response teams to conduct COVID-19 testing at workplaces (with dates that testing occurred).

Was Iowa Select the only company that received the drive-through testing service from the IDPH as well as the testing kits?

Laura

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From: **Laura Belin** <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com>
Date: Fri, Apr 2, 2021 at 3:15 PM
Subject: Fwd: "rapid response team" to Iowa Select?
To: Sarah Ekstrand <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov>

Hello again,

What's the status on this information?

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Laura Belin** <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com>
Date: Fri, Mar 26, 2021 at 5:51 PM
Subject: Re: "rapid response team" to Iowa Select?
To: Ekstrand, Sarah <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov>

OK, I will look for it next week. Please also let me know if you have any additional information concerning the strike teams, beyond what you sent me in January.

Have a good weekend,

Laura

On Fri, Mar 26, 2021 at 5:33 PM Ekstrand, Sarah <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov> wrote:

Hi Laura,

I was just about to email you. I'm not going to have this ready for you today. I am working on it, and will have it for you early next week. Again, I apologize for the delay.

Thank you,
Sarah Ekstrand
Public Information Officer, Iowa Department of Public Health
515.401.7988
321 E. 12th Street Des Moines, IA 50319
sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov



On Fri, Mar 26, 2021 at 5:11 PM Laura Belin <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com> wrote:

Hello Sarah,

Any idea when I can expect to receive this information?

Laura

On Wed, Mar 24, 2021 at 9:25 AM Ekstrand, Sarah <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov> wrote:

Hi Laura,

I will have this to you by the end of this week. I'm sorry for the delay.

Thank you,
Sarah Ekstrand
Public Information Officer, Iowa Department of Public Health
515.401.7988
321 E. 12th Street Des Moines, IA 50319
sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov



On Tue, Mar 23, 2021 at 9:50 AM Laura Belin <laurarbelin@

bleedingheartland.com> wrote:

Sarah, I'm circling back on this because it's been more than six weeks since you had indicated you were working on this documentation.

It should not be difficult for IDPH to figure out how many times the state sent COVID-19 testing kits to businesses (with dates), and how many times the state sent rapid response teams to conduct testing at workplaces (with dates).

Was Iowa Select the only company that received this special "rapid response team" treatment? My impression was that by last summer, businesses were generally expected to use Test Iowa or other resources to test their workforce.

Laura

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Laura Belin** <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com>

Date: Fri, Mar 12, 2021 at 11:28 AM

Subject: Re: "rapid response team" to Iowa Select?

To: Ekstrand, Sarah <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov>

Sarah, I don't believe I ever got this information either, specifying the number of times (with dates) that the state assisted companies by sending them COVID-19 testing kits and/or rapid response teams to conduct the testing.

Thanks in advance for sending that documentation to me.

Laura

On Wed, Feb 3, 2021 at 11:49 AM Ekstrand, Sarah <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov> wrote:

Hi Laura,

I am working on documentation that will include the information you're asking about, and hoping to have it before the end of the week.

Thank you,
Sarah Ekstrand
Public Information Officer, Iowa Department of Public Health
515.401.7988
321 E. 12th Street Des Moines, IA 50319
sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov



On Wed, Feb 3, 2021 at 8:18 AM Laura Belin <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com> wrote:

Sarah, following up on these questions. Officials have indicated that about 60 companies received some kind of COVID-19 testing assistance from the state last year. Based on information you have previously sent, my understanding is that nine companies received a "strike team" visit

involving Iowa National Guard personnel. Please confirm that is still accurate.

I'm seeking further details on when companies received other forms of assistance. I know that some (such as TPI Composites) received testing kits only, while others (including Iowa Select) received a "rapid response" team including personnel to administer the COVID-19 tests.

I know that IDPH does not release the business names, but I'm seeking further details:

1. A list of instances when the state sent COVID-19 testing kits to Iowa-based companies during calendar year 2020, with dates. I realize the business names may be redacted, but I still want to know how many companies received that kind of help and the date range showing when that program was operational.
2. A list of instances when the state sent rapid response teams with not only the testing kits, but the personnel to administer the COVID-19 tests at Iowa workplaces. Again, I am looking for dates for each example during calendar year 2020. I know Iowa Select received a visit on July 13 but I don't know whether that was the last rapid response visit.

Please advise whether this is something you can handle or if I need to go through Open Records.

Laura

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Laura Belin** <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com>
Date: Wed, Jan 27, 2021 at 3:35 PM
Subject: "rapid response team" to Iowa Select?
To: Sarah Ekstrand <sarah.ekstrand@idph.iowa.gov>

Hello Sarah,

I'm seeking clarification on this story:

<https://apnews.com/article/public-health-iowa-kim-reynolds-des-moines-coronavirus-pandemic-639cc1c485701ce6eef074a34577d8e2>

1. Did this July 13 testing event involve IDPH personnel only, or also Iowa National Guard personnel? The article references a "rapid-response state team," but I'm not sure what that means.
2. Were "rapid-response state teams" sent to other white collar office settings? If so, on what basis did IDPH determine which companies would be prioritized for testing?
3. Why would the state dispatch anyone to a white collar office for COVID-19 testing? Couldn't most of those people be working from home? And couldn't the company shoulder the cost of testing 32 employees? And wasn't testing widely available through Test Iowa by July?

I thought the IDPH was focused on surveillance testing in congregate

settings or large manufacturing/processing workplaces.

4. Do you have additional comment on this matter?

Thanks,

Laura

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<http://www.bleedingheartland.com>

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