



April 2, 2020

Urgent Plea from the Pulaski County Health Department & Pulaski Memorial Hospital to Protect Lives and Limit the Threat of COVID-19

Pulaski Memorial Hospital and the Pulaski County Health Department urge local businesses to realize that now is the best time to accelerate and heighten aggressive measure to prevent or limit the spread of COVID-19 in our surrounding areas. It is critical to understand that many infected patients will have no symptoms for up to two days. Many will have very mild symptoms that may not be a concern to the patient, thus making spread within a business or factory inevitable and potentially catastrophic.

Our Plea to Local Businesses

The Pulaski County COVID-19 Task Force is asking local businesses **to please close for two weeks to maximize the effectiveness of our strongest weapon in our war on COVID-19.** As a sparsely populated rural community, our best weapon in the fight against this devastating disease is minimizing its introduction and limiting its spread. We must do everything possible to “flatten the curve” of the coronavirus pandemic by:

- Suspend operations at your businesses/plants for the next two weeks
- Get your employees and their families to self-quarantine for 14 days
- Get your employees and their families to practice “real social distancing” for those 14 days
- Protect our county’s limited resources and our doctors, nurses and all medical professionals

BraunAbility Has Stepped Up as a Business and Community Leader

In support of Pulaski County Health Department officials’ request to area businesses to help protect the community from the threat and spread of COVID-19, business leader BraunAbility has made a decision to lead the effort and suspend its Winamac-based manufacturing and assembly operations now through Monday, April 20.

“As the largest employer in Pulaski County, it’s our responsibility to do what we can to protect our employees, their families and the entire community,” said Tom Eastman, President of North American Manufacturing. **“Our manufacturing and assembly operations will be suspended temporarily to allow time to both flatten the curve locally and conserve community resources. On April 20th we’ll get back to the business of changing lives for people with mobility challenges, but this important decision will potentially help us save lives during this challenging time.”**

Company officials reinforced that no employee has tested positive to date; the temporary suspension is a response to the request from Pulaski County health officials to help flatten the curve. BraunAbility is the largest employer in Pulaski County with nearly 1000 employees at its global manufacturing headquarters in Winamac. Last week the global leader in wheelchair accessible vehicle and wheelchair lift manufacturing was granted essential business status from the state of Indiana because people with physical disabilities rely on those products to carry on their daily lives.

If you are still not convinced of the need, please consider the following:

Our Access to Personal Protective Equipment and Medical Equipment is Limited

Federal resources like medical supplies and protective equipment will be distributed based upon population, and we know we will receive a very-limited amount of those much-needed supplies. Even though we are willing and able to purchase supplies, their availability is still based upon population. Our doctors, nurses, patient caregivers at our area hospital and nursing homes are relying on area businesses to help keep them safe and available on the frontline so they can keep us healthy and safe during the coronavirus pandemic.



Rural Communities Are at High Risk

This [link shows the most recent national epidemiologist modeling](#) of the predicted effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic. Indiana's epidemiologist modeling is consistent with the national modeling. The experts predict that this devastating pandemic will be even more devastating in rural areas than it is in urban areas.

Our community may have limited access to federal resources based on population, but being a rural community with a sparse population has its advantages if we all practice social distancing and do our part to flatten the curve.

Protect Your Business and Prevent Lawsuits

Many companies have attorneys that can find loopholes to make their business essential under Indiana's Stay-At-Home Order. While those attorneys work hard to find loopholes, other attorneys are working hard to prepare for "wrongful death" suits against those companies that did not follow the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and ISDH (Indiana State Department of Health) guidelines to protect their employees.

For those companies that really can't shut down because they provide essential needs to our area residents like Sanders, CVS, etc. We urge you to require the maximum protection for your employees and your customers, including but not limited to:

- Screening and monitoring employees upon entering work
- Social distancing of employees and customers
- 14-day self-quarantine for anyone with potential exposure

How Pulaski County Health Officials Can Support You During This Time

The Pulaski County Health Department and Pulaski Memorial Hospital are available to you to share strategies that may assist with your individual needs and have been aggressively creating and implementing strategies of our own to prepare for this crisis. Screening for symptoms such as fever, sore throat, cough, headache, body aches in the past 24 hours are felt to be a minimum and a simple questionnaire could accomplish this, although taking temperatures as well would be ideal. This can be accomplished by a variety of easily trained personnel, not just nurses. Again, the goal here is to identify infected workers prior to symptoms developing or as early in their clinical course as possible.

We are sending a respectful plea to you to understand the absolute necessity to implement CDC and ISDH guidelines to protect your employees, their families and our community. We believe these efforts to be our area's only hope to aggressively stifle the spread of coronavirus.

Thank you for your support in this battle against the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Dan Anderson, M.D.

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Tom Barry

President of Medical Staff'

County Health Officer

President & CEO

Pulaski Memorial Hospital

Pulaski Co. Health Department

Pulaski Memorial Hospital