



NEWS RELEASE

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Utah Department of Health to Use Rapid Testing

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) laboratory will be able to perform quick preliminary tests for the presence of anthrax organisms in environmental samples beginning Wednesday. The UDOH was awaiting reagents (testing chemicals) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that will allow the laboratory to use the rapid testing equipment that was already in place. The reagents have arrived and rapid preliminary testing will be available Wednesday.

The rapid test will allow public health officials to quickly analyze a sample after law enforcement has deemed the sample as a credible threat. The test takes two hours but there are many steps in processing a sample. Additional time will be necessary to transport the sample to the lab, review the chain of custody, prioritize the sample against others that come in, set up and process the sample, and then analyze the results. All in all, the UDOH estimates, on average, that preliminary results will be available in 4 hours but this could range from 2 to 24 hours depending on these other factors.

These initial results will help law enforcement, health departments and health care providers make preliminary decisions on how to proceed with investigations and antibiotic treatments. The CDC is still recommending that the traditional 48-hour culture be performed on all samples. With availability of the more rapid test results health care providers may be able to hold off on prescribing antibiotics. The rapid test may also provide earlier reassurance to those who believe they might have been exposed to anthrax.

There have been no cases of anthrax in Utah. In addition, there have been no confirmed exposures to anthrax in Utah.

NOTE: The UDOH Laboratory is not open to the public or the media. In addition, we ask that you exercise caution in identifying the exact location of the lab for security purposes.

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