City responds to union claims regarding testing mandate
Testing mandate begins Nov. 1
Testing mandate is an effort to protect public safety by keeping employees healthy

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The City's new COVID-19 testing mandate will go into effect on Monday, Nov. 1. The policy will require unvaccinated employees to be tested weekly. Additionally, the test will be provided and administered at the City's expense. Employees who have not been vaccinated or willing to provide vaccination status will be subject to the testing protocol.

"I am extremely disappointed with the comments made this morning by union leaders representing our safety forces," said Shelley Dickstein, Dayton City Manager. "While the testing start date has changed due to the test availability and to allow more employees the opportunity to get vaccinated, the new testing protocol was discussed months ago with all union leadership."

In August, the City held what would be a series of meetings with both police and fire union leadership to discuss details of the planned testing mandate. Based on these discussions, the City made several changes to the original proposed policy. These changes included: delaying the initial announcement of the policy to all employees while discussions continued; pushing the start date back to allow employees more time to obtain a vaccination; the City bearing all costs associated with testing; and several other concessions.

"When putting together this policy, I wanted an approach that would underscore the importance of getting vaccinated but would still allow for personal choice," said Dickstein. "Since we made the announcement regarding our testing mandate, we have continued to see an uptick in the number of employees affected by COVID-19. As City Manager I have an obligation to keep employees safe and ensure we can deliver services to our taxpayers. This mandate allows us to do both."

The testing mandate is an effort to protect public safety by keeping employees healthy. Over the past six months, we have continued to see employees testing positive for COVID-19 throughout the organization. Additionally, of the City's nearly 1,800 employees 773 are not vaccinated or failed to disclose their vaccination status. Among these employees, 464 are from the police and fire departments.

Employees who refuse to test will be sent home on unpaid leave until they provide a negative PCR COVID-19 test obtained through their own resources. Employees who do not show up for work without prior authorization are considered absent without official leave (AWOL) and will be disciplined accordingly.

According to press statements made by the Dayton Fraternal Order of Police, hundreds of police and firefighters may stay home beginning on Monday. The Dayton Police Dept. and Dayton Fire Dept. have put together contingency plans for staffing and will use all means at their disposal to ensure public safety for our residents if large numbers of employees are not on the job as scheduled.

A few reminders about the importance and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines (data from Public Health–Dayton & Montgomery County):

+ Vaccination reduces risk of contracting COVID-19, the risk of severe illness, hospitalization or death, the risk of spreading COVID-19 to others, and the risk of numerous consequences including "Long COVID" symptoms;

+ If vaccinated, the risk of COVID-19 and severe illness is reduced by 90% or more, and the risk of dying from COVID infection is 25 times less;

+ 86% of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 in Western Central Ohio are unvaccinated.

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