

Acushnet Fire Chief Gallagher issues statement on positive COVID-19 tests results in town

“At the close of this week, 78 Acushnet residents have tested positive for Covid-19.

“This number comes as a result of a person being tested, the test coming back positive, the state being notified by the testing facility then calling the Acushnet Health Agent who passes the addresses (not the names) to public safety officials so our 9-1-1- database can be updated for the protection of our first responders. That is an awful lot of steps over an awful lot of time.

“As a town, we agreed that providing these numbers is important to keep the community updated as we are updated. In the mid-afternoon of each day, seven days per week, I send an email to the Standard-Times so they can update their running tally which is then shared in both their print and online editions. The goal is to be transparent in order for the public to stay informed.

“We have been reporting no deaths in the town of Acushnet because the state has not told us of any. However, when asked by a reporter to update our earlier response we learned of a glitch that deserves to be explained. When a person dies, the “place of occurrence” is formally notified. So, if a person living in New Bedford but walking in Acushnet suddenly dies, Acushnet officials are informed of the death, not officials from the person’s hometown.

“What we discovered is that, since the pandemic started, four residents of Acushnet have died of Covid-19 while in New

Bedford, two at a nursing home and two at the hospital. These deaths were reported, per the procedure, to New Bedford officials. The death certificates slowly make their way to the Town Clerk in Acushnet for appropriate record keeping. New Bedford, in turn, would add these deaths to the number they share to the local newspaper. Based on this process, a death is not double reported (by New Bedford and by Acushnet) which would be misleading to all involved.

"The point of all of this, four Acushnet residents have died as a result of a virus that traveled from China with breakneck speed and took root in our area with devastating results. We did not fail to report these deaths, we were simply not connecting all the dots and for that I apologize. I'm sorry if previous numbers shared now seem misleading. Residents have a right to know everything that is going on so you can decide for yourself how to respond in real time to the events swirling around you.

"I am also sorry to the families, loved ones and friends of the four members of this community who have suffered a Covid-19 related death. While we do not know their names, chances are we crossed their path in this small little town. They were part of the fabric of this community and we mourn their loss.

"Seventy-eight cases and four deaths, as of today Acushnet! It doesn't take a genius to know that number can't go down. It only takes common sense to know it will only go up."

Kevin A. Gallagher
Fire Chief."