

A **55 year old female** employee was exposed to **COVID-19** while working as a full time Patient Services Representative in the EP Department Front Desk at Ascension Saint Thomas West Heart. In addition, she worked overtime hours at two other Ascension locations in the two weeks prior to her COVID-19 diagnosis.

The victim was hospitalized with a confirmed case of COVID-19 on December 13, 2020 and subsequently died during her hospitalization on December 18, 2020.

The victim's normal job duties at her fulltime position involved checking patients in and out, exchanging information and occasional paperwork with other staff at the clinic, and assisting patients over the phone. Her desk was located at the front of the facility behind a plastic barrier. While working in the facility, she and other employees were required to wear face coverings such as cloth coverings or surgical masks. Patients who were suspected of having, or known to have COVID-19, were required to reschedule appointments. If employees were exposed to COVID-19 or experiencing symptoms, they were required to notify employee health and not return to work until the appropriate actions had been taken such as testing or quarantining.

Although employees at Ascension Saint Thomas West Heart were required to follow the above protocol, five other employees who worked in the same department tested positive for COVID-19 within the two weeks prior to the victim's diagnosis. The employer's internal investigation found that these five employees had eaten lunch together on December 3, 2020. As a direct result, three of the cases, including the victim's, were recorded on the employer's 300 log for 2020.

During a phone conversation with the victim's sister, an employee of the Outpatient Rehab Clinic, it was stated that the victim believed she was exposed to COVID-19 at her regular, fulltime position. The sister stated that the victim's coworkers did not take the use of masks as seriously as they should have. Furthermore, she indicated that while she had also tested positive for COVID-19, her symptoms did not begin until December 14, 2020 after a work-related exposure to her sister during lunch.

Citation(s) as Originally Issued

A complete inspection was conducted at the accident scene. Some of the items cited may not directly relate to the fatality.

No citations issued as a result of this fatality inspection.

