

Contact Precautions Fatality File

One person with covid-19 went to work in Oregon. Then, 7 people died and 300 had to quarantine.

A southern Oregon community was recently devastated by two coronavirus outbreaks that killed seven people and caused hundreds to quarantine fearing they had been exposed to the virus.

But unlike headline-grabbing outbreaks that have led to deaths elsewhere in the United States, these covid-19 clusters did not spring from a “super spreader event.” Instead, public health officials say a single person who went to work sick sparked the spread through “super spreader actions.”

Douglas County officials said last week that a person knowingly went to work while suffering symptoms and later tested positive for the novel coronavirus. Two recent outbreaks in the county, which were reported by the Oregonian on Tuesday, were traced back to that individual and the ensuing infections forced hundreds of county residents into self-quarantine.

“One of those outbreaks has resulted in seven deaths, and the other recent outbreak has placed over 300 people/families in quarantine,” Douglas County Public Health Officer Bob Dannenhoffer said in a statement Thursday. “We can’t even imagine the tremendous remorse these people are feeling right now, and we sympathize with them.”

Public health officials did not disclose the name of the workplace where the outbreak began or the name of the individual who passed the virus on to others.