

Pilot COVID-19 testing for commercial fishing industry started on Friday

The Port of New Bedford has partnered with Southcoast Health to pilot targeted COVID-19 testing for workers in the commercial fishing industry and others, beginning with commercial fishermen on the New Bedford waterfront Friday.

Using the Southcoast Mobile Health Van, testing began Friday afternoon for fishing crews whose vessels are slated to leave the port after their results are available. The testing Friday is a trial run to prepare for expanded testing capability by Southcoast Health as more COVID-19 testing becomes available. Targeted testing for essential and high-risk employees will be key to continuing to plan for reopening of the local economy and adjusting social distancing in the workplace.

Medical interpreters will be on site, and literature in multiple languages will be available at the mobile testing site. This site will pilot best practices for mobile testing as more tests become available to healthcare providers, preparing Southcoast Health and the City of New Bedford for expanded testing capabilities, including for targeted essential workers.

“COVID-19 has made the most dangerous profession even more dangerous,” said Mayor Jon Mitchell. “Because fishermen are required to work in confined spaces on board, they are at greater risk of viral transmission than most. For their protection, and to maintain New Bedford’s role as one of America’s primary sources for seafood, we’re proud to launch this effort with Southcoast Health to offer targeted testing to fishing crews.”

“Southcoast’s mission is driven by our commitment to the

communities we serve every day. All people in all communities,” said Keith Hovan, President and CEO of Southcoast Health. “Especially now, when we must ensure that no one feels they are coping with this crisis on their own, providing full health care access close to home is more important than ever. Thank you to Mayor Mitchell and the city of New Bedford for helping to make this program possible. We look forward to expanding testing outreach through our continued partnership.”

“We’re excited to support essential workers, the commercial fishermen who supply food to the nation, and continue to keep America’s top fishing port going through this partnership with Southcoast Health,” said Port Director Edward Anthes-Washburn.