

LUCELEC Donation Strengthens COVID-19 Testing At Ezra Long Lab

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Castries, October 19, 2021 – The ability to test quickly for COVID-19 is a critical part of the national response to the virus. This is especially so for health officials managing cases in this fourth wave. And that’s where the Ezra Long Laboratory at the Owen King EU Hospital comes in. It is tasked with a 24-hour turnaround of test results. Laboratory Director Dr Wayne Felicien says it is a commitment the lab has been able to meet with the assistance of the St. Lucia Electricity Services Limited (LUCELEC).

“LUCELEC thankfully has done a second donation to the Ezra Long lab and by extension to Saint Lucia to assist in the testing of SARS-COV-2 or COVID-19 and this has gone a long way to us trying to meet our turnaround time of 24 hours in terms of testing. That contribution alone has gone a long way to reducing the spread over this period of time between the months of August and September. The numbers are high, we can’t get around that. The positivity rate is high, comparatively. But we think it could have been a lot worse if we did not have these extra resources just to facilitate proper testing,” says Dr Wayne Felicien.



The Laboratory Director is speaking of a more than **\$160,000** donation of test kits and consumables donated by LUCELEC in July. It enabled the lab to deliver COVID-19 results in quick time. Dr Felicien says testing, and providing results quickly, are critical steps in managing national COVID-19 infections.

“When you look at January, February when we had significant backlogs and when I say backlogs we were extending our (testing) turnaround to six days and sometimes had accumulated almost 1,000 samples. With LUCELEC’s most recent donation we were able to turn around samples within 24 hours eliminating backlogs within a reasonable timeframe. And a lot of companies, government services, and the Police were able to make decisions in real time as opposed to having six-day time lapses, and having persons in the community who have been exposed, developing positivity and, by extension, spreading the virus.”

This is the second donation LUCELEC has made to increase the testing capacity of the facility.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Sharon Belmar-George says the LUCELEC donation “has really assisted us in managing the cases and their contacts in a very timely manner so we are extremely grateful for that level of collaboration with LUCELEC. This isn’t the first time LUCELEC has supported our testing at the Ezra Long

Lab. But this second donation of test kits and consumables is very significant and if you look at our management of this fourth wave where we've noted a vast increase of cases in a shorter period of time, this is the most cases we've managed. Our testing capacity per day has gone up to over 500 per day and the lab has been able to maintain the 24-hour turnaround time and this is because of the support of LUCELEC.”

Testing is a necessary and expensive part of managing COVID-19 on island. LUCELEC Managing Director Trevor Louisy says it is for these reasons that the Company responded quickly to such requests from the Ezra Long Laboratory.

“The two donations we've made to improve testing capacity at the Ezra Long Laboratory, totalling over a quarter of a million dollars, continue the partnership with and commitment we have made to the government and people of Saint Lucia. We are all in this fight against COVID-19 together and LUCELEC is seeking to play its part in a very real way, where it is needed the most.”

Each COVID-19 test costs approximately US\$150 and is provided free of charge at respiratory clinics across the island.

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