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Divine Flavor using aggressive tactics against COVID-19

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As one of the largest distribution companies in the city of Nogales, grower and distributor Divine Flavor has had all employees tested for COVID-19 to promote safe working conditions as it begins its table grape season.

Since the first week of May, when Divine Flavor Repackers, an affiliated company of Divine Flavor LLC, experienced its first positive COVID-19 cases, the company has been on a mission to be an example for how to respond.

The company decided to be proactive and send all employees, including management, to health clinics in Nogales and Tucson to be tested — paid in full by the company.

As another precautionary measure, employees who worked closely with those who tested positive in the repack facility, were asked self-quarantine, even if they tested negative for the disease.

“As a company, our employees are always the number one priority,” said General Manager of Divine Flavor Jose Antonio Martinez. “Because we took swift action with all of our employees, this allowed us to verify no other departments were affected by this situation.”

The company continues its preventive measures such as temperature screenings before entering the work premises, increased sanitation procedures, as well as clear, stay-at-home guidelines for employees who could experience any COVID-like symptoms.

“Starting at the very beginning of this pandemic, our company has implemented very stringent measures all designed to protect our workers the best ways possible,” said Sergio Cienfuegos, Divine Flavor’s warehouse manager. “Our staff feel we have one of the safest work establishments in Nogales because everyone in the company has been tested and the company acts quickly.”

Since the first case was officially announced at the Divine Flavor facility, management has been in close communication with the Santa Cruz County Health Department, reviewing additional guidance and how it has affected other parts of the community. “We’ve had great communication with multiple local agencies, including the health department,” said Martinez. “They are fully aware of our COVID-19 protocols and actions, and have recognized them as being thorough and consistent with the recommended guidelines.”

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues and the testing is scaled up, health officials anticipate more communities will see the number increase of people testing positive. “No community and no sector of the economy is exempt from this,” said Martinez.

“Because we were one of the first produce companies in Nogales to have experienced this, we want to be a positive example for other companies so they can learn from how we responded to the situation,” Martinez continued. “If our other produce colleagues encounter similar circumstances, we want them to know our guidance and phone lines are always open for them.”

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