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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Local COVID-19 Testing Capacity to Nearly Triple

The Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory (PHL) will nearly triple its capacity to conduct testing for COVID-19 thanks to a new piece of equipment paid for with state and federal grant funding.

The Kingfisher Flex by ThermoFisher Scientific automates the extraction of RNA, the genetic material that allows a microbiologist to determine if a patient sample contains markers for the COVID-19 virus. This automation will allow approximately 94 samples to be prepared for the next step in the process in less than 30 minutes, up from 10 per hour when the work is done by hand.

The lab currently processes about 85 samples per day but will be able to run up to 250 per day when the machine is operational and staff are fully trained in its use, anticipated by the end of August. This increased efficiency will allow staff to work on testing and services unrelated to COVID-19 that were deferred by the pandemic.

Laboratory Manager Jeremy Corrigan said, "Adding this new COVID-19 test and automated extraction platform is a game changer for our county. Not only will we triple our local testing capacity, but we will maintain multiple testing options, so that we are not at the mercy of stressed reagent and consumable supply chains and have flexibility to respond locally to the COVID-19 pandemic."

The KingFisher and associated supplies cost approximately \$73,000, and is paid for through the California Department of Public Health Community Surveillance Grant and the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The State of California also provided \$150,000 worth of reagents that will allow the local lab to run 4,000 samples with the new machine.

Humboldt County Health Officer Dr. Teresa Frankovich said she was excited to be able to leverage state and federal funding to support local needs. "We're isolated in Humboldt County, and while that helps us to manage the pandemic more effectively in some ways, it also limits our quick access to commercial labs and other testing resources that other areas have more readily available," she said. "This new equipment will leave us better positioned to handle a surge in COVID-19 locally and identify new cases quickly so we can prevent further spread of this virus."

For the most recent COVID-19 information, visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or [cdph.ca.gov](https://www.cdph.ca.gov). Local information is available at [humboldt.gov](https://www.humboldt.gov) or during business hours by contacting [covidinfo@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:covidinfo@co.humboldt.ca.us) or calling 707-441-5000.

Humboldt County COVID-19 Data Dashboard: [humboldt.gov/dashboard](https://www.humboldt.gov/dashboard),  
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Public Health Laboratory Manager Jeremy Corrigan with the newly delivered Kingfisher Flex RNA extractor.