

US Health Authority Shipped Faulty Coronavirus Test Kits Across Country: Official

By [Channel News Asia](#)

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A number of test kits sent out by United States health authorities to labs across the country to diagnose the deadly novel coronavirus are faulty, a senior official said on Wednesday (Feb 12).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began shipping 200 test kits nationwide on Feb 5 to speed up the diagnosis of US cases of COVID-19, which currently number at 13.

But the labs reported that while performing a verification procedure they realised the kits were returning inconclusive results, meaning neither positive nor negative, said senior CDC official **Nancy Messonnier**.

“We think that the issue at the stage, can be explained by one reagent that isn’t performing as it should, consistently,” she said, referring to one of the substances used in the kit. “And that’s why we are remanufacturing that reagent.”

It was not clear how many kits were flawed. Of six US state health departments that responded to Reuters’ requests for comment, half of them, including California and Georgia, said they were waiting for a replacement component for kits to make them work.

Other states, such as Illinois, said kits had produced accurate results and they were now doing their own testing.

The test issues came up as scientists from the United States and other countries tried to get access to data to validate reports suggesting the number of new cases of the virus in China has been dropping.

Since late January, the CDC has rushed to distribute the kits to allow states to do their own, faster testing rather than ship all samples to CDC headquarters in Atlanta.

Accelerating the speed of tests, which can be delayed by days if sent to Atlanta, is important given the agency’s expectation the virus at some point is likely to start spreading within US communities.

Messonnier cautioned that at some point the US was likely to see community spread of the virus.

She told reporters that authorities “should be prepared for this new virus to take a foothold in the US”.

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