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Editor's note: *This story was originally published in the Times Union. The original version can be read here.*

A deadly outbreak of coronavirus has infected the congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in Latham, taking the lives of nine nuns in just over a month.

Thirteen nuns have died at the facility since Nov. 25. Albany County officials initially could not pinpoint the number of deaths attributed to the coronavirus. On Tuesday evening, county spokeswoman Mary Rozak emailed the Times Union a statement from county Health Commissioner Elizabeth Whalen saying the county was aware of the nine COVID-19-related deaths.

"Four of the deaths associated with the congregation had been previously reported earlier this month by the hospitals," Whalen said in the statement. 'The other five were not reported to the Albany County Department of Health by the facility."

The COVID-19 deaths at the 370-year-old congregation at St. Joseph's Provincial House on Watervliet-Shaker Road, a convent, are part of the region's worst period of infection since the pandemic began last winter.

"Our department has been working with the congregation on outbreak control since early December, and worked with additional private professional staff brought in by the facility to provide infection control guidance," Whalen said. She said the facility

is not under the oversight of the state Department of Health of other regulatory agencies.

"Our heartfelt condolences go out to those in the community," Whalen said.

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Rozak said she could not comment on individual names under privacy rules under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. Seven of the 13 nuns who died were in their 90s, five in their 80s and one in her late 70s, obituaries showed.

The facility is home to 140 nuns, according to its website.

"All of us at the Diocese of Albany are praying for the sisters during this challenging time," said Mary DeTurris Poust , a spokeswoman for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany. "In addition to the loss of so many beloved sisters who served others so selflessly for decades, there is the added difficulty of not being able to celebrate their lives as a community due to COVID restrictions. As for so many people who have lost loved ones in recent months, the already difficult task of grieving is made even more difficult by isolation and lack of closure."

On Monday, Poust relayed that Sr. Mary Rose Noonan, the communications director for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, said the facility was "still in the middle of this sadness" and not ready to give a public statement.

Noonan had also said the home has "had cases like every other nursing home but the deceased were not all COVID patients and we would like to protect the privacy of all of our sisters at the present time."