

Press Release

Contact: Tim Rowe, Public Information Officer

Phone: 907.852.9264

Email: timothy.rowe@arcticslope.org

First COVID-19 Case in the Arctic Slope Native Association Area

May 27, 2020 - Utqiagvik, Alaska: The first patient in the North Slope region has tested positive for COVID-19. The patient was in Anchorage and stopped in Utqiagvik before traveling on to their home community. The patient has been instructed to self-isolate and is in contact with State of Alaska Section of Epidemiology and Public Health Nursing to ensure appropriate precautions are being taken.

The individual was rapid tested May 22, 2020 at Samuel Simmonds Memorial Hospital, and a confirmatory test was sent to Alaska Native Medical Center. At the time of testing, the patient was not experiencing any symptoms. The specific community of residence is not being released to protect the privacy of the patient.

Samuel Simmonds Memorial Hospital (SSMH) has prepared a rapid response team consisting of a Physician, Physician's Assistant, Lab Assistant, and a members of Nursing to mobilize to their location. This team will be joining a medical provider who had previously traveled to the community to provide routine care. This team will provide COVID-19 testing for anyone who may have come into contact with the patient, and work with the community on hand hygiene and other ways to prevent the spread of the disease. The team is expected to arrive in the community immediately.

SSMH activated its incident command structure on March 16 to manage the COVID-19 pandemic in the region. SSMH is also working with the North Slope Borough Emergency Operations Center and is communicating daily with regional community leaders.

The region's first case emphasizes the importance of following recommendations of social distancing and safe hygiene practices. SSMH encourages anyone who must leave their home to wear a face covering in public (cloth mask, scarf, buff, etc.).

SSMH has recommendations for its regional patients experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. The following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure:

- Cough
- Fever
- shortness of breath
- fatigue

- new-onset diarrhea
- loss of smell or taste

If you are experiencing symptoms please contact the SSMH COVID-19 Hotline at 1-833-852-4622 with any questions. If you live in Utqiagvik, you may access the drive-thru testing option. If you are in a village, please contact your local clinic to arrange testing and notify clinic staff before your arrival. Testing is open to any individual requesting it, regardless of symptoms or travel history.

Please continue to follow the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations for protecting yourself against COVID-19 by practicing social distancing and washing your hands frequently. More information on protecting yourself can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>

###

