

Press Release

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Traveler is the third COVID-19 case in the Arctic Slope Native Association Area

June 18, 2020 - Utqiagvik, Alaska: A third individual (traveler) in the North Slope region has tested positive for COVID-19. The individual is not a North Slope resident, and traveled to Utqiagvik for business. They arrived on June 15 and received a rapid test at the airport. The individual's rapid test results were negative. For every rapid test collected by Samuel Simmonds Memorial Hospital (SSMH), a confirmatory PCR sample is also collected. On June 16 the individual traveled back to their home community of Anchorage. The individual is no longer on-slope. This morning, the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) informed us that the result of the additional PCR test detected the presence of COVID-19. The patient is in contact with State of Alaska Section of Epidemiology, North Slope Borough Public Health Nursing, and the Anchorage Health Department for contact tracing, and to ensure appropriate precautions are being taken. The Anchorage Health Department will reach out to Alaska Airlines.

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.

This further 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, neck gaiter, 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 be able to use 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>

For additional precautionary information on travel safety guidelines, please follow the attached link from Alaska Airlines at <https://www.alaskaair.com/content/advisories/coronavirus>

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