

Press Release

Contact: Tim Rowe, Public Information Officer

Phone: 907.852.9264

Email: timothy.rowe@arcticslope.org

North Slope resident in the Arctic Slope Native Association Area tests positive for COVID-19

June 19, 2020 - Utqiagvik, Alaska: A fourth individual in the North Slope region has tested positive for COVID-19. Late in the evening on June 18, ASNA was notified by the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) that the result of a PCR test detected the presence of COVID-19. The individual is a North Slope resident. To protect the privacy of the individual, the specific community of residence is not being released.

On June 16, the individual was rapid tested and the sample returned as negative. For every rapid test collected by Samuel Simmonds Memorial Hospital (SSMH), a confirmatory PCR sample is also collected. In this case, the PCR test results were positive. Upon notification of the positive PCR test, the SSMH rapid response team tested the individual a second time, again using a rapid test and another PCR sample was collected. The individual's close contacts were also tested using the rapid test. All rapid tests conducted were negative. The confirmatory PCR samples that were collected are being sent to the ANMC laboratory for processing, and results are pending. The individual has been in contact with State of Alaska Section of Epidemiology and the North Slope Borough Public Health Nursing for contact tracing, and to ensure appropriate precautions are being taken.

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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