

Press Release

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

July 20, 2020 - Utqiagvik, Alaska: A non-resident traveling for work in the North Slope region has tested positive for COVID-19. The individual arrived in Utqiagvik and received a rapid test. For every rapid test collected by Samuel Simmonds Memorial Hospital (SSMH), per our testing standards, a confirmatory PCR sample is also collected, this second test also resulted as positive. The individual has been self-isolating and will remain in quarantine until cleared per State of Alaska and Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines.

The North Slope Borough contact tracing team have continued to reach out to individuals that may have been exposed and will provide additional information on appropriate precautions. SSMH is committed to providing COVID-19 testing for anyone in the community who believes they may have been exposed, and encourages the community to continue practicing precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the disease.

Testing is available at the airport for each in-bound Alaska Airlines flight, as well as drive-thru availability at the hospital Monday – Friday from 8am until 7pm. The tests are available with no out-of-pocket costs, and may be repeated every seven (7) days.

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, North Slope Borough Health Department, and is communicating daily with regional community leaders.

This further emphasizes the importance of following recommendations of social distancing and safe hygiene practices. SSMH strongly 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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