

Press Release

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Eighteen North Slope residents test positive for COVID-19

January 12, 2021 - Utqiagvik, Alaska: (New cases) As of 12:00pm today, the Arctic Slope Native Association (ASNA) has been notified that eighteen (18) North Slope Borough residents have tested positive for COVID-19. All eighteen (18) of the individuals are residents of North Slope Borough communities. The individuals have been instructed to self-isolate.

Samuel Simmonds Memorial Hospital (SSMH) and the North Slope Borough (NSB) Health Department are in contact with the individuals, and will continue to provide monitoring if on slope. The NSB contact tracing team will continue to reach out to individuals who may have been exposed and will provide additional information on appropriate precautions. *The medical team at SSMH strongly recommends that residents participate in COVID-19 testing especially if experiencing symptoms. Individuals experiencing symptoms should call SSMH COVID-19 Hotline at 1-833-852-4622. Other recommendations to prevent the spread include: stay 6 feet apart from other people, limit social contact, wear a facemask in public, and wash hands frequently.*

(Recovered cases) Nine (9) North Slope residents have met the CDC guidelines and have been released from isolation.

(Active cases) Currently, there are one hundred ten (110) active cases, including non-residents, in the Arctic Slope region.

(Hospitalizations & Deaths) Currently, due to COVID-19, there are four (4) hospitalizations at SSMH; with cumulative total of thirty-seven (37) hospitalizations to date. The North Slope Borough has a cumulative total of four (4) residents who have passed away to date.

(Cumulative total) The North Slope Borough has a cumulative total of eight hundred seventy (870) resident cases to date.

(Vaccine total) ASNA is pleased to announce that SSMH has received both State of Alaska and Indian Health Services allocations of the Pfizer vaccine. Distribution is being guided by the State of Alaska COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force. The COVID-19 vaccine is now available for our elders by appointment. To schedule an appointment with SSMH, **please call SSMH Appointment Line at (907)852-9156.** Additional vaccination options are available through the North Slope Borough Health Department. Combined, SSMH and the NSB have administered a total of 234 first doses, and 98 second doses of vaccine to date. Additional information about the vaccine is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/8-things.html>

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. Please be aware that several North Slope communities have recently implemented travel restrictions. If you need testing prior to traveling, please contact the SSMH COVID-19 Hotline at 1-833-852-4622 to access the SSMH online testing form follow the link at <https://intakeq.com/new/p0oWeK/3rTyva>

Testing is available every day from 8am until 7pm at the old NSB Transit Station facility at 1710 Ahkovak Street, located near the airport. This location will accommodate testing for each in-bound Alaska Airlines flight, as well as drive-thru capability. 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 NSB Emergency Operations Center, NSB Health Department, and is communicating daily with regional community leaders.

SSMH strongly recommends residents to limit the amount of non-essential activities and day-to-day social interactions. Additionally, anyone who must leave their home, is encouraged to wear a facemask in public.

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 health clinic to arrange testing and notify clinic staff before your arrival. Testing is open to any individual, 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>

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