

Press Release

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**Vaccine Appointments for North Slope Borough Residents;
Two North Slope Residents Test Positive for COVID-19**

March 9, 2021 - Utqiagvik, Alaska: The Arctic Slope Native Association (ASNA) is pleased to announce that Samuel Simmonds Memorial Hospital (SSMH) has received both State of Alaska and Indian Health Services allocations of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Appointments are required. Vaccine doses are time sensitive, meaning they must be administered within a short period of time. Individuals 16 years and older, interested in getting the vaccine may schedule an appointment by calling **SSMH COVID-19 Vaccine Appointment Line at (907) 852-9156 or (907) 367-6292**. Appointments are available Monday through Friday, 9am-4:30pm. SSMH is also hosting vaccine clinics every Saturday. All appointments will be scheduled in the order they are requested. The vaccine is available with no out-of-pocket costs.

SSMH Rapid Response Teams are providing vaccinations in the villages. SSMH teams have been to all villages within the ASNA service area to provide first doses to all interested residents, with return trips scheduled throughout the month.

For questions, please email covidvaccine@arcticslope.org. Information about the vaccine is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/8-things.html>.

Additional COVID-19 vaccination options are available through the North Slope Borough (NSB) Health Department.

(Vaccination total) SSMH and the NSB have administered a total of one thousand, seven hundred sixty-six (1,766) first doses, and one thousand, four hundred fifty-three (1,453) second doses of vaccine to date. It is recommended that individuals who receive the COVID-19 vaccine continue to practice preventive measures that reduce the spread of the virus: stay 6 feet apart from others, limit social contact, wear a facemask in public, wash hands frequently, and get tested.

(New cases) As of 12:00pm today, ASNA was notified of two (2) individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19. One (1) is a resident of Utqiagvik and one (1) is a resident of a North Slope Borough community. Additionally, ASNA was notified that the resident of a North Slope Borough community tested positive off-slope, quarantined, and has since recovered. The individual was added to the number of cumulative cases and simultaneously to the recovered case number.

(Recovered cases) Two (2) North Slope residents have met the CDC guidelines and have been released from isolation, including the individual listed above.

(Active cases) Currently, there are one (2) active case in the Arctic Slope region.

(Hospitalizations & Deaths) Currently, due to COVID-19, there are zero (0) hospitalizations at SSMH; with cumulative total of thirty-nine (39) 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 nine hundred thirty-eight (938) resident cases to date.

SSMH and the 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. 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.*

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 Monday through Friday, 10am-6pm and Saturday & Sunday, 12pm-5pm 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
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Fever
- New-onset diarrhea
- Loss of smell or taste

If you are experiencing symptoms please contact SSMH COVID-19 Hotline: 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 available regardless of symptoms or travel history.

Please continue to follow the CDC recommendations for protecting yourself against COVID-19: practice social distancing and wash 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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