

Press Release

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**Two Utqiagvik Residents Test Positive for COVID-19;
Delta Variant identified in ASNA Service Area**

August 3, 2021 - Utqiagvik, Alaska: (New cases) As of 12p.m. today, the Arctic Slope Native Association (ASNA) was notified that two (2) residents of Utqiagvik have tested positive for COVID-19. Both individuals tested in Utqiagvik and have been instructed to isolate. Recent cases indicate community spread of the virus is occurring.

Additionally, the COVID-19 Delta variant has been identified in the community. This variant is considered to have a higher level of transmissibility. Vaccinated individuals have less risk to be hospitalized due to illness, however, possibility for transmission to unvaccinated individuals may occur. In response to the risk associated with this variant, ASNA is requiring that all visitors and employees wear a hospital grade procedure mask while inside any ASNA facility, including the Samuel Simmonds Memorial Hospital (SSMH). Procedure masks are available at the screening stations in facility entrances.

(Active cases) Currently, there are six (6) active cases in the Arctic Slope region. At this time, it is still unclear of the location of one individual who tested off-slope last week.

(Vaccination total) SSMH and the North Slope Borough (NSB) have administered a total of two thousand, six hundred eighty-five (2,685) first doses, and two thousand, seven hundred ten (2,710) second doses of Pfizer or single dose Janssen vaccine to date. It is recommended that individuals who receive the COVID-19 vaccine should continue to practice preventive measures to reduce the spread of the virus: stay 6 feet apart from others, limit social contact, wear a face-mask in public, wash hands frequently, and get tested.

(Hospitalizations & Deaths) Currently, due to COVID-19, there no hospitalizations at SSMH; with cumulative total of forty-three (43) 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 ninety-two (992) 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 may have 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://intakeg.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.

Children ages 12-17 years may receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Individuals under age 18 will need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian to be given the vaccine. Appointments are required. Vaccine doses are time sensitive, meaning they must be administered within a short period of time. Please schedule an appointment by calling **SSMH COVID-19 Vaccine Appointment Line at (907) 852-9156 or (907) 367-6292**. Appointments are available Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9am-4:30pm. 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 the vaccine to all interested residents, with return trips scheduled throughout the month. Additional COVID-19 vaccination options are available through the North Slope Borough (NSB) Health Department. For questions, please email covidvaccine@arcticslope.org.

SSMH activated its incident command structure on March 16, 2020 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 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. More information on protecting yourself can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/about-covid-19.html>

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