

Mike Dunleavy
Governor

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Governor

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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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First case of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) confirmed by Alaska State Public Health Laboratory is an international resident

March 12, 2020 (Anchorage, AK) – Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy, with the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) today announced Alaska’s first presumptive positive case of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The patient is a foreign national who developed a fever and respiratory symptoms shortly after arriving in Anchorage on March 11. DHSS is coordinating closely with Alaska Regional Hospital where this individual was tested; strict infection control protocols were followed. This is a travel-associated case of COVID-19, not a case of community-acquired infection.

“We do have our first case identified of the COVID-19 virus, which is not unusual given what’s been happening elsewhere with this pandemic. This is no surprise as this is something we in Alaska have been preparing for since January. We feel good about the protocols we have in place and will continue to work our protocols. We continue to work with the federal government, the CDC, other health professionals in this country, as well as fellow Governors to see what they’re doing in their states,” **said Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy**. “Again, there is no reason to panic, no reason to get upset. We expect to have more cases as time goes on and Alaska is as prepared as any other state to take on this issue.”

“We understand this news will be concerning to Alaskans, but we have expected Alaska would get the first case of COVID-19 and we have been diligently preparing for this possibility,” **said Alaska’s Chief Medical Officer Dr. Anne Zink**. “Alaska’s health emergency response system has been activated since late January and we have been working with federal, Tribal, state, local and health care partners to ensure we have strong systems in place to limit or prevent the spread of COVID-19.”

The presumptive positive test result was reported by the Alaska State Public Health Laboratory in Anchorage, which has been able to test for COVID-19 since February 27. The sample is being sent to CDC for final confirmation, which is the current protocol for COVID-19 testing. The DHSS Section of Epidemiology has already begun identifying

people who have had close contact with the individual. Those who have been exposed and are considered at risk will undergo self-quarantine for 14 days with public health supervision. The typical incubation period (time from infection to symptom onset) for COVID-19 is 2-14 days.

State of Alaska epidemiologists have talked to the patient and were encouraged to learn that the patient had very limited contact with others, stayed isolated since symptoms started yesterday, and followed the appropriate recommendations.

“Isolation of this ill patient and self-quarantine of anyone who has had close contact with this person are needed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others in the community,” **said Alaska State Epidemiologist, Dr. Joe McLaughlin.** “Like the flu, this novel coronavirus spreads primarily through respiratory droplets and close contact with an infected individual.”

DHSS will continue to inform the public with updates as needed. For additional information:

- DHSS: [2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- CDC: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

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