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State Emergency Operations Center activated to support COVID-19 response *Unified Command strengthens and broadens state response*

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Governor Mike Dunleavy's public health disaster emergency declaration last week in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic activated a unified command structure, which was stood up on Monday in the State Emergency Operations Center.

The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), Department of Public Safety (DPS) and Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) will coordinate the state's unified effort for COVID-19. The unified command also engages all state departments to use their capabilities as needed to ensure a swift and effective COVID-19 response.

"DHSS has worked extremely hard to coordinate our response and keep the public informed about COVID-19 in Alaska. Beginning with the flight to repatriate Americans living in Wuhan, to the inevitable first case in Alaska, they have responded with a level of professionalism that is a model for the nation," said Bryan Fisher, Incident Commander. "We have confirmed cases in Alaska, with more expected, the state has elevating its response and are bringing to bear every necessary element of state government to address this serious illness."

The State Emergency Operations Center ensures that partner agency and community requests for assistance are coordinated in a timely manner through a state network of available resources.

"We're looking forward to the added resources and strength that this cross-department coordinated effort will provide," said DHSS Commissioner Adam Crum. "We've been preparing for COVID-19 cases in Alaska for more than six weeks. Starting last week we began detecting cases. So far, all of these cases are associated with travel history but we know from what we're seeing in other states that community transmission of this disease in Alaska will likely be found soon. Our goal is to slow and blunt the spread of the disease so we can save lives and prevent our health care system in Alaska from becoming overwhelmed."

Timeline

- **March 2** - Governor Dunleavy submitted a supplemental budget amendment to fund COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts.
- **March 11** – The Governor issued public health disaster emergency declaration for COVID-19
- **March 12** – First positive case of COVID-19 detected in Alaska.
- **March 13** – Mandate 1 closed public schools until March 30 and limited access to several state institutions.

- **March 16** –Mandate 2 closed state libraries, archives and museums, and required students to return home from residential school programs.
- **March 17** – Mandate 3 closed bars, breweries, restaurants, food and beverage kiosks and trucks and other establishments serving food and beverages to be closed to public dine-in services. Mandate 4 reinforced travel guidance provided in State of Alaska Health Alert 5 (Traveler Alert).

“We have seen a great level of voluntary coordination between federal, Tribal, state, and local partners to date. As the impact of this virus expands, we are prepared to direct assets to support our DHSS partners,” said Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe, commissioner for the DMVA and adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard. “The Unified Command is coordinating state needs and stands ready to support all Alaskans.” He added, “Our Hometown Army and Air Force in the Alaska National Guard is prepared to respond.”

Alaskans are encouraged to stay informed, listen to their local elected and health officials and their primary care provider. For more information on Alaska’s response to COVID-19, please visit www.coronavirus.alaska.gov. Find CDC guidance at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus. Find helpful information on DHSS, DHSEM and DPS Facebook pages and consider sharing COVID-19 relevant information on social media.

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