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Commissioner

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Department of Health  
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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**As COVID-19 cases rise, DHSS adds personnel and provides added regional support**

October 25, 2020 ANCHORAGE — The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) today announced 526 new cases of COVID-19 in Alaska – 520 residents and six nonresidents. Following yesterday’s record high case count, this represents another significant escalation of COVID-19 cases in Alaska. As reported yesterday, the increase is due to widespread community transmission, increased testing in many communities and efforts by the Division of Public Health to enter backlogged case data.

All but three of the state’s regions are now in the high alert zone (average daily case rate over 14 days per 100,000 is >10 cases/100,000). For detailed information about today’s cases, as well as current hospitalization data, please visit the [Alaska Coronavirus Response Hub](#).

With the rise in cases comes increased efforts by DHSS and Unified Command, including a new team tasked with regional community engagement and support. The Division of Public Health is in constant communication with communities around the state to identify specific needs and deliver support.

“We’re doing all we can, with the full support of our governor, to respond vigorously to this increase in cases,” said DHSS Commissioner Adam Crum. “While DHSS provides support to Alaska’s communities, we’re also asking all Alaskans to step up their COVID prevention efforts to help flatten the curve again. While the vast majority of today’s cases are younger than age 60, the saturation of the virus in the community increases the likelihood that our vulnerable populations such as older Alaskans or others at risk of severe illness will be infected, and these are the groups we are especially trying to protect. This won’t last forever, but right now we are asking all Alaskans to come together and slow this community spread and protect the most vulnerable among us.”

Additional recent support to Alaska’s communities includes:

- **Additional testing:** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently sent 50 new Abbott ID rapid testing machines to Alaska that will be distributed across the state. These rapid tests will be used for emerging case clusters and to protect congregate settings such as homeless shelters, long-term care facilities, correction facilities, schools and workplaces.

- **Public Health Nursing support:** Public Health Nursing sent a strike team that responds to outbreaks to Bethel this weekend to assist with testing, contact tracing and community education.
- **PPE and testing supplies:** On Friday, the DHSS warehouse shipped 1,400 pounds of personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing equipment to Bethel. That shipment includes gloves requested by the [Yukon-Kuskokwim Heath Corporation](#). The DHSS warehouse is also continuing to ship PPE and testing supplies throughout Alaska.
- **Alternate care sites:** Hospital capacity is still holding steady, but as always, the state continues to maintain the Alaska Airlines Center alternate care site. Hospitals continue to maintain their on-campus surge capacity and offsite alternate care sites. Norton Sound Health Corporation is establishing a new alternate care site.
- **New personnel and additional contracting help:** The Division of Public Health, along with procurement and human resources, are continuing to hire contact tracers and data entry personnel and to purchase critical PPE supplies. Additional testing contractors are also being brought on to ensure accessible and affordable testing throughout the state.

#### **To prevent the spread of COVID-19:**

- Isolate yourself if you feel any cold-like symptoms and get tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible.
- Avoid crowded places and gatherings with anyone outside your immediate household, especially indoor gatherings; keep social circles very small.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from people outside of your household.
- Always have a mask on when you are around people outside of your household – even if you can maintain a 6-foot distance from others.
- Wash your hands often and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and objects.
- If you test positive for COVID-19, notify all of your close contacts immediately; you can use the [tracking sheet on the back of this flyer to help](#).
- Please answer the call if a public health contact tracer calls you and follow their guidance.

#### **Assistance**

- If you or your family need food, housing, or other non-medical assistance, please contact **Alaska 2-1-1 (dial 211 or 800-478-2221)** or your local emergency operations center for help.

#### **Stay informed about COVID-19**

- [Alaska's response](#)
  - [Subscribe to DHSS Alerts](#) to receive daily case counts and weekly case summaries via email or text or follow DHSS on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#)
- [United States' response](#)
- [Global response](#)

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