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**Department of Health
and Social Services**

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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alaska reports new high for COVID-19 cases; public health officials urge Alaskans to take prevention measures seriously

October 24, 2020 ANCHORAGE — The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) today announced 355 new people identified with COVID-19 in Alaska – 353 residents and two nonresidents. This represents a significant increase over yesterday’s total count of 242 new cases.

Alaska’s COVID-19 cases are accelerating, driven by widespread community transmission throughout most of Alaska, with all but three of the state’s regions now in the high alert zone (average daily case rate over 14 days per 100,000 is >10 cases/100,000).

Over the past weeks, clinics and communities statewide have been increasing testing and identifying more cases, which are reported to the Section of Epidemiology (SOE), Division of Public Health. SOE has augmented data entry efforts by hiring additional staff and streamlining processes but has not been able to keep daily pace with these reports. New cases are continuing to be identified while SOE works through backlogged data entry. Based on the cases currently being entered today from SOE, the number of cases expected to be reported tomorrow to the [Alaska Coronavirus Response Hub](#) will likely be even higher than today’s count.

When a person tests positive for COVID-19, they are first notified of their result by testing facilities or providers. The public health contact tracing team has also been expanding capacity to meet the increased needs, but because of the data reporting backlog, it may be several days before cases are entered into the system and a contact tracer can call those who test positive. In the meantime, those who test positive are urged to immediately call their own [close contacts](#). The sooner close contacts can self-quarantine, get tested, and isolate if needed, the better to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

“Individual Alaskans working together have the power to slow down COVID-19, protecting our elders, our friends, our families and our health care capacity,” said Alaska’s Chief Medical Officer Dr. Anne Zink. “Alaskans are strong and resilient, and we care for each other. COVID-19 has asked a lot from all of us. Our current situation will not last forever. There is much to be hopeful about with more

treatment options and vaccines on the horizon, but now is the time for all of us to take all the steps we can as individuals and as communities to help slow the spread.”

“The science has clearly shown that prevention works,” said State Epidemiologist Dr. Joe McLaughlin. “Until we have a safe and effective vaccine, we need all Alaskans to double their efforts and follow COVID-19 prevention strategies in their daily lives.”

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.
 - 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.
- Avoid crowded places and 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.

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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