

Valdez COVID-19 Unified Command

NEWS RELEASE # 002

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Valdez, AK – The community of Valdez received confirmation of two additional positive cases of COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) on Wednesday. One case is a Valdez resident; the other is a non-resident.

Upon receipt of confirmed positive results, state public health officials conduct something called a “contact investigation” to determine where the patient has been and who they may have come into contact with over the course of the last two weeks.

Resident Case

The resident case is an adult male with symptoms. The patient is currently in isolation at home and following the guidance of their medical provider and public health officials.

Following a preliminary investigation, the resident case has been identified as a City of Valdez employee who had limited contact with the public over the past 14 days. Several close contacts of the patient, including family members and several coworkers, are currently in quarantine. The contact investigation for this case is ongoing, with all close contacts anticipated to be notified by Thursday afternoon. No significant impacts to City of Valdez operations are anticipated.

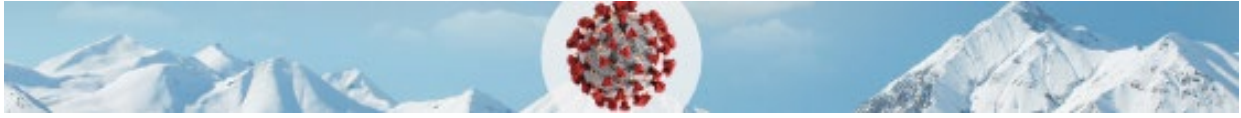
“This case is an example of an individual and his family who did all the right things to protect others. They kept their social circle small, practiced social distancing, and routinely wore face coverings around others, especially indoors,” said Dr. John Cullen, physician at Valdez Medical Clinic, LLC. “We all knew it was just a matter of time before COVID-19 appeared again in Valdez. The first resident case could have been any one of us. Now that we have signs of infection in the community, we must focus on supporting and protecting each other.”

Non-Resident Case

The non-resident case is an asymptomatic adult male who completed testing as part of their employer’s COVID-19 traveler screening plan. The patient is currently in isolation and following the guidance of their medical provider and public health officials. Alaska Department of Health and Social Services classifies the patient as an “Other Industry” worker and will list them separately from the total state case count based upon their residency.

The contact investigation for this case determined the patient has remained in isolation since arrival in Valdez on June 23rd and had no contact with anyone in the community. Several individuals identified as close contacts prior to the patient’s arrival in Valdez are currently in quarantine. Public health officials believe the current risk to the Valdez community for this case is low due to employer screening and isolation of this asymptomatic patient.

“This is great example of an employer COVID-19 traveler screening plan working as intended,” said Dr. Angela Alfaro, physician consultant to the Valdez Unified Command. “However, additional cases in our community are an important reminder the threat of COVID-19 is real. Hand hygiene, physical distancing, wearing a cloth face covering, keeping your social circle small, and staying home if you are sick are the ways our community works together to keep each other safe.”



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As people continue to travel in and out of Valdez, additional cases may be identified. Residents, employers, and visitors must continue making thoughtful and careful decisions as long as COVID-19 remains present in Alaska and beyond.

Residents and visitors are encouraged to monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms which include a fever, cough, sore throat, difficulty breathing, loss of taste or smell, and any new onset of illness. If you believe you have even mild symptoms, contact your healthcare provider for screening, and closely follow their instructions. Remember to call ahead before you go to the doctor's office, public health clinic, or hospital. The local medical team will continue to provide the best possible care for you and our community.

Limited asymptomatic testing is currently available in Valdez for select high risk populations. Visit www.valdezak.gov/COVID-19 to learn more about different local testing options.

We recognize these latest developments may create additional stress and uncertainty among residents. The Unified Command and public health officials continue to closely monitor the rapidly changing course of COVID-19. We remain committed to providing information, support, and resources to protect the health, safety, and well-being of Valdez during this extraordinary and unprecedented time.

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