



KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH, CITY OF KETCHIKAN, AND CITY OF SAXMAN

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE: COVID-19 | NO NEW CASES IN KETCHIKAN

Date: March 23, 2020
From: Ketchikan Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
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For Immediate Release

This brief responds to questions received by the EOC on March 22 and 23, 2020.

COVID-19 Case Count

We have received no new reports of COVID-19 cases in Ketchikan since Saturday, March 21st. The total of positive cases in Alaska is now at 36. The total of positive cases in Ketchikan remains to be six (6).

Public Health has continued to monitor the individuals who were identified as close contacts to the individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19. Public Health will notify and isolate additional persons as appropriate. Through the contact investigation, Public Health will direct testing of persons that meet criteria based on contact with any confirmed case of COVID-19. Individuals who meet the criteria are being tested in accordance with CDC and State of Alaska priorities.

Due to the highly contagious nature of COVID-19 we urge Ketchikan residents to take this virus seriously and take actions to help stop the spread now.

How Do We Stop the Spread?

In keeping with the emergency mayoral proclamation issued on March 21st by the mayors of the City of Ketchikan, City of Saxman, and Ketchikan Gateway Borough, citizens are strongly urged to **hunker down, shelter in place, and stay home**, in order to contain the spread of COVID-19. We urge citizens to do the following:

- ✓ **Hunker down and shelter in place.**
- ✓ **Stay home and work from home as much as possible.**
- ✓ **Conduct business via telephonic or electronic means as much as possible.**
- ✓ In accordance with Governor Dunleavy's March 20th Health Mandate, remember:
 - **No gatherings of more than 10 people may take place.**

- **If a gathering does take place people must be 6 feet apart from each other.**
- ✓ If you are sick or suspect that you may be infected with the COVID-19 virus, take steps to help prevent the disease from spreading to people in your home and community. If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms, such as cough or difficulty breathing, **call your healthcare provider for medical advice.**
- ✓ **Follow all health mandates issued by Governor Dunleavy, the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), and the Center for Disease Control (CDC).**

What If You Are Healthy and Need to Go to the Grocery Store?

- ✓ If you are healthy and believe you are not at risk of having COVID-19 and need to go to a grocery store:
 - **Call ahead to order and take advantage of delivery or curbside pickup options.**
 - **Do not linger at the store.**
 - **Wash your hands with soap and water before and after you go to the store.**
 - **Avoid touching your nose, face and mouth.**
 - **Use hand sanitizer that is at least 60 percent alcohol. Use sanitizing wipes for the grocery cart.**
 - **Stay six feet away from others.**
 - **When possible, use touch pad check-out and credit card for purchases.**
 - **Wear gloves and bring your own pen for the checkout transaction.**

What the Grocery Stores Are Doing to Assist With Social Distancing

EOC staff has met with grocery store managers to communicate recommendations for how to facilitate social distancing while remaining open to customers. Grocery store personnel are recommended to wash hands frequently with soap and water, use hand sanitizer, wipe down surfaces including check stands, screens, and counters often. It is also recommended that grocery store cashiers wear gloves while making customer transactions. Posters with safe social distancing guidelines will be distributed to the grocery stores.

Our local grocery stores have implemented social distancing procedures by:

- Offering order ahead and delivery options. Call the stores directly for specific store information. Safeway is offering curbside pickup.

- Ceasing self-serve food products in deli sections. The deli counters remain open for store staff to package food for customers.
- Social distancing and COVID-19 messaging is being played over the audio system;
- Checkout floor areas are marked as six feet apart for customer guidance on where to stand while waiting in line;
- Descriptive signage is displayed for purposes of traffic flow for shopping in aisles;
- A&P is using every other register only;
- Special shopping hours have been set up for senior citizens and those citizens who may be at a high risk if exposed to COVID-19. Contact each store directly for specific information.

COVID-19 Testing Information

PeaceHealth Medical Center has established an alternate testing location outside of the hospital emergency room entrance. The EOC is working on plans for two additional locations for testing sites. The Creekside Family Medical Clinic and the Ketchikan Indian Community (KIC) Health Clinic have agreed to provide alternate testing sites at the point that they are requested to do so by the EOC. The additional sites would be drive-through testing services.

Ketchikan International Airport Update

The Airport Manager meets regularly with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the airlines. Passenger counts are down 82% nationally and around 75% in Southeast Alaska. The Alaska Aviation Commissioner has announced that closing airports is not an option at this time. Ongoing cleaning is occurring for the Ketchikan airport and ferry in an effort to keep it as virus free as possible. All airport staff is healthy and practicing good habits as directed by the CDC and our local EOC. No Airport staff members have been ill in the past three weeks, and staff are encouraged to hunker down on their days off. Signage has been provided throughout the airport communicating the Governor's social distancing mandate and the 14-day quarantine guidelines. The airport is playing informational COVID-19 precaution public service announcements over its public address system.

****Update: This afternoon Governor Dunleavy issued a new travel mandate to require a 14-day quarantine for everyone arriving from an out-of-state location, effective 12:01 a.m. on March 25, 2020.**

The Governor's health mandates can be found at:
<https://gov.alaska.gov/home/covid19-healthmandates/>

Borough Transit Update

The Bus is making additional changes in response to the recent joint mayoral proclamation under state of emergency to Shelter in Place and call for social distancing. Starting immediately the following bus system policies will go in effect:

- Bus capacity will be limited to 9 passengers, please plan travel accordingly;
- Passengers are required to enter and exit through the rear doors of the bus (unless you are using a mobility device or require the use of the ramp);
- Fare collection and pass sales will be suspended for a minimum of one month;
- Passengers are asked to stay six feet apart from the driver and other customers while on the bus and at bus stops; and
- Passengers are strongly advised to only take trips in order to get to work related to essential service, medical appointments, grocery and/or pharmacy services.

What if Additional Safety Measures Are Needed for Our Community?

Governor Dunleavy has issued several health mandates for Alaskan communities. Additionally, our local mayors issued the Shelter In Place proclamation. Any further mandates for ceasing of activity would come from the Governor. The local EOC and its partner agencies, including fire, police, and medical professionals, are working together to prepare for potential extreme circumstances.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Updates and Information

Each EOC section chief has a deputy chief who is trained to assume the role if the chief should become unavailable. A roster of primary EOC staff members is available on the COVID-19 page of the Borough and City websites. In addition to the primary staff members, there are multiple layers of staff members assigned to each EOC section. There are federal, state, and local municipal partner employees who are trained and are serving in the various section groups.

The EOC Logistics Team has an inventory of emergency supplies, equipment, and facilities that are available for use during the emergency. We have additional testing kits, personal protective equipment (PPE) and emergency equipment on order. We continue to urge the community to hunker down, shelter in place, and stay home, in order to stop the spread of COVID-19. It is imperative that citizens follow the directives and stay home so that our medical community does not become overwhelmed.

The EOC has been in communication with a National Guard representative who has reported that there are 15 Guardsmen available to assist the community should the need arise.

Additional current information on COVID-19 is available through the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) at www.coronavirus.alaska.gov.

EOC information and the response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Ketchikan, included a Daily EOC Situation Report, is updated daily on the COVID-19 Response page at <https://www.kgbak.us/913/COVID-19-Response>.

#ketchikanstayhealthy #staystrongketchikan #stepsforahealthycommunity
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