



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

EOC COVID-19 UPDATE: POSITIVE COMMUNITY RESPONSE

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From: Ketchikan Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
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For Immediate Release

Last week the EOC announced a cluster of positive COVID-19 cases that were related to five local establishments. The announcement was provided to the public in an effort to make people aware of potential exposure to COVID-19, and encourage close contacts to quarantine and seek testing.

It was not the intent of the EOC to draw negative attention to the establishments or to imply that they had done anything wrong. The EOC is very aware of the hardships that these businesses have faced the past year, and we sincerely apologize for any perception that the EOC was calling out businesses in a negative light. In fact, the EOC is very pleased with the manner in which these establishments have worked with the EOC and Public Health, and have implemented employee testing protocols and mitigation plans for their businesses.

Public Health Process to Identify Close Contacts: When a positive case of COVID-19 is identified, Public Health works with the positive individual to identify anyone with whom that person has been in close contact to instruct them to quarantine and seek testing. The goal is to identify close contacts within 48 hours of the positive test result. If the period of time spans longer than 48 hours, there is a greater risk that people carrying the virus can unknowingly spread it within the community. Therefore, every attempt is made by Public Health to notify close contacts within that 48 hour timeframe.

In many of the cases identified last week, unfortunately, the nature of the operation and the length of potential interaction in those locations led to the difficulty in the contact tracing. The close contacts could not be identified by Public Health through the normal investigation, and an announcement of the commonly attended businesses became necessary. It was necessary to announce the risk to the public so that people could self-identify and proceed with quarantine and testing. Four of the five named businesses were contacted by Public Health prior to the announcement, and messages were left for the fifth business.

Positive Response from Community: Along with the announcement of the community spread, the EOC extended the days and hours of the free drive-up COVID-19 testing. We were pleased to see that the community took advantage of the available testing the days following the announcement, and that people were self-identifying as having potentially been exposed and were self-quarantining.

Thank You to Ketchikan CHARR and its Members: Steven Kantor, president of Ketchikan Cabaret, Hotel, Restaurant, & Retailers Association (CHARR), has shared information regarding

CHARR's safe workplace practices with the EOC. The standards are in line with the State of Alaska Reopening Plan and the Alaska CHARR guidelines. Those practices include:

- Cleaning and sanitizing protocols;
- Encouraging mask wearing;
- Monitoring employee health and personal hygiene;
- Some establishments have limited business hours;
- Some businesses have increased spacing between tables;
- During moderate and high risk levels, businesses have reduced the capacity standards;
- Lowered the music level so that voices can be lowered to limit risk of sharing germs;
- Live entertainment has been canceled, limited, or postponed;
- Encouraging employee testing protocols.

Mr. Kantor is working with the Ketchikan businesses to promote employee testing and COVID-conscious mitigation efforts. Similarly, other business managers have informed the EOC of their employee testing, precautionary measures, and customer outreach. The EOC commends these businesses for their mindful implementation of safe practices and thanks them for their dedication to the community.

Ongoing Efforts for Improvement: Both the EOC and Ketchikan CHARR acknowledge that with better planning and communication, the events of last week could have been processed more effectively. The EOC and CHARR will continue to work together for improvements for the health and safety of our community.

Even with proper protocols in place, there is still a risk that COVID-19 can be contracted. The EOC and Ketchikan CHARR urge all businesses and citizens to continue to follow the guidance for COVID precautions. If everyone does their part to follow these safety measures, our local businesses can remain open and our economy can continue to improve.

"Ketchikan CHARR continues to urge our businesses to follow the hospitality guidelines for best safety practices. By staying vigilant and monitoring how we conduct business, we can move forward with serving the community and keeping our employees and customers safe. We extend a heartfelt gratitude to all of our patrons and citizens for helping to keep our workplace safe."

– Steven Kantor, President, Ketchikan CHARR

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