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**NEWS RELEASE**



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## **DHSS breaks ground on new virology lab**

*\$32 million project underway on UAF campus*

(Juneau, Alaska) — Officials from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services and the University of Alaska Fairbanks, along with political and health leaders, gathered today at the UAF campus to break ground on the new state virology laboratory.

“This collaborative project will result in the sharing of ideas and new knowledge between the Department of Health and Social Services and the UAF Health Research Program,” Commissioner Karleen Jackson said during the groundbreaking ceremony.

The virology laboratory is a joint effort of the Department of Health and Social Services and the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Its estimated total cost is more than \$32 million. The Department of Health and Social Services will occupy the ground level and upper level while UAF will occupy the basement level. The total square footage for the entire building is nearly 29,000 and the facility is expected to be completed by December 2009.

The new building will replace the current facility located on the West Ridge of the UAF campus and will expand the laboratory’s operations to include more space for the safe and proper isolation of potential biological hazards. The additional space will provide surge capacity for critical public health laboratory work in the event of a health emergency or other disaster that could overwhelm the Anchorage laboratory.

GHEMM Company, Inc. has already begun site preparation for the new virology laboratory, which will be connected to UAF’s Biological Research and Diagnostics (BiRD) facility.

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