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Media Update

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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May 20 Media Update on swine flu

(Anchorage, AK)—As of Tuesday, May 19, 2009, both Alaska Department of Health and Social Services laboratories have been validated by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to confirm H1N1 (swine) flu cases in Alaska. As of this morning, however, there are still no confirmed cases of swine flu in this state.

The department's Anchorage Laboratory is located at 4500 Boniface Parkway. The Fairbanks laboratory is located on the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus and primarily studies viruses, including influenza.

"Having the ability to test for, and confirm, H1N1 swine flu in Alaska labs will save critical time in making diagnoses," said Dr. Bernd Jilly, chief of Alaska public health laboratories. "The sooner we confirm a case of swine flu, the quicker we can work to limit the spread of illness and ensure sick people are receiving the most appropriate treatment."

Immediate access to new information is available on our Web site (see below) or by signing up on our DHSS Twitter page at http://twitter.com/Alaska_DHSS.

Our primary messages remain:

Health officials recommend following the same advice given for preventing seasonal influenza:

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water.** Use hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- **Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.** Cough or sneeze into a tissue or inside your elbow. Then wash your hands or use hand sanitizer.
- **Stay home if you are sick.** If you have flu symptoms such as fever, body aches and cough, stay home from work or school and avoid public activities for at least five days (seven for children) to prevent spreading the disease to others.

The department will continue to update its Web site at <http://www.pandemicflu.alaska.gov/> with state, national and international information about swine flu.

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