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**Department of Health
and Social Services**

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Seafood processing plant in Seward responding to COVID-19 outbreak

July 22, 2020 ANCHORAGE – An employee at a seafood processing plant in Seward tested positive for COVID-19 on Sunday. OBI Seafoods, the operator of the plant, with support from the Seward Community Health Center, immediately began testing all 262 of the plant’s employees and implemented isolation protocols for its workforce in advance of contact tracing.

The first case was identified when the employee sought medical care at the Providence Seward Medical Center for an unrelated health issue.

With all test results now returned from a commercial lab contracted by the company, 96 employees at the Seward processing facility have tested positive for COVID-19. As part of OBI’s Community and Workforce Protective Plan, all employees coming from outside Alaska were tested prior to arrival and twice while in quarantine before being released into the workforce. The company has been operating as a closed campus and all employees who reside in company housing must remain on company property at all times.

Some OBI employees are Seward residents and live off campus. Of those, 11 have tested positive. All of those individuals are currently isolating in their homes but have the option of moving into company housing during isolation. This incident is unrelated to the outbreak aboard the American Triumph, which docked in Seward today so employees could be transported to Anchorage for isolation.

“Alaska is currently experiencing three large, separate outbreaks of COVID-19 in the seafood industry,” said Dr. Joe McLaughlin, Alaska’s State Epidemiologist. “These outbreaks are reminiscent of the meat packing plant outbreaks in the Lower 48 and stress the importance of vigilant symptom screening and prompt facility-wide testing in congregate work settings when index cases are identified.”

OBI is working very closely with the DHSS Division of Public Health, the City of Seward, the community health center, the Anchorage Health Department and other community partners to control the outbreak as quickly as possible and prevent any further spread of the disease.

The company reported that the vast majority of the employees who tested positive say they are not experiencing COVID symptoms. No company employees have been hospitalized due to COVID to date. Employees who tested positive were transported today to Anchorage by private ground transportation and will be isolated in a safe and secure location. OBI will provide all medical care, monitoring, security and housing for the employees. Precautions are being taken during transport and upon arrival to protect the communities of Anchorage and Seward.

Employees who tested negative will remain in Seward under quarantine where they will be monitored and tested every three days until no additional positive cases are identified.

Contact tracing is being conducted by the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Public Health Nursing but all employees are currently considered to be close contacts. After the first case was identified, the company proactively closed the facility to undergo deep cleaning and disinfection according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance](#).

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