COVID-19 in Alaska

Revisions to Health Mandate 10

Dr. Anne Zink, Alaska’s Chief Medical Officer
June 3, 2020
COVID-19 Dashboard: Reporting data from 6/2/2020

- 18 new cases (505 total)
- 1 new nonresident case (23 total)
- 2 additional recovered cases (373 total)
- No new additional deaths (10 total)
- No new hospitalizations (47 total)
- 58,183 cumulative tests
- 0.9% of tests were positive
Visitors: Enjoy Alaska, but leave the virus at home.

Travelers are welcome to come to Alaska and after 11:55 p.m. on Friday, June 5 will no longer have to quarantine as long as they can show they have had a negative PCR test for COVID-19 taken within five days of traveling. They will also be asked to minimize in-person interactions for an additional 7-14 days after arrival and will be offered a follow-up test.
Before you go:
• Get tested (coming to AK)
• Limit exposure
• Know the local rules
• Plan your trip to minimize your interactions – fishing license, food pick-up, etc.
• Back up plans and insurance

During travel and upon arrival:
• Use a mask
• Hand hygiene
• Declaration form
• Provide test results or get tested on arrival
• Educational material
• Receive voucher for repeat testing

Watch the window
• Limit exposure – avoid any public indoor space for >10 min during the window
• Get repeat test 7-14 days after arrival
• If repeat test is negative, follow the same guidelines as the local community
Travel and COVID-19

• Travel is:
  • One of four major ways that the COVID-19 outbreak could accelerate
  • Important to many businesses, families, Alaskans and non-residents

• Travel restrictions are important tools for states and countries to slow the spread of COVID-19 and keep cases down.

• The federal government still limits non-essential travel to the U.S. from certain areas.

• Canada still limits non-essential travel across the borders.
Travel and COVID-19

• Traveling during a pandemic is not simple. There will be some degree of uncertainty. This is not a time to travel lightly, but it’s important to permit travel and ensure it is as safe as possible.

• Travel is essential for Alaskans and the travel industry is an important part of our economy.

• The health and well-being of Alaskans is our top priority.
Alaskans: Enjoy your travels, but be healthy and safe.

- COVID-19 is not the souvenir you want to bring home. And don’t bring it with you on your travels.
- Don’t travel if:
  - You’re sick, even with mild symptoms
  - You’ve been in close contact with anyone with COVID-19 in the 14 days prior to traveling
- All travelers should minimize their exposure to other people for 14 days before and after travel
Reopening Alaska’s skies and seas: Is this a safe plan?

• Interstate travel has been allowed with a 14-day quarantine requirement, but this alone is only so effective at minimizing the risk of spread.

• We expect more travel, but stronger systems will be in place to test and educate visitors.

• Airlines and tourism companies are consistently updating their protocols based on data and CDC guidance as restrictions ease. It’s in everyone’s best interest to keep visitors and Alaskans safe.

• Airline terminals are designed to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Social distancing and other precautions are required and will become even more important.

• The rigorous cleaning protocols at Alaska’s airports have been enhanced to include more-frequent cleaning, use of hospital grade disinfectants, and periodic steam cleaning as an additional precaution.
Healthy people & a healthy economy are one & the same

• Safe travel is essential to Alaska’s economy and Alaska’s way of life.
• The relatively low number of cases in Alaska makes it acceptable to take some risks. But we also need to take precautions and monitor for a rapid rise in cases.
• Traveling during a pandemic carries higher risk.
• Alaska is a vast state with a limited health care system and conditions could change quickly.
  • Much of AK doesn’t have 9-1-1 coverage, it can be hundreds of miles between hospitals, there is limited specialty care.
• Anyone at higher risk or with underlying health conditions should consider their personal risk level when deciding to travel. Medical, evacuation and travel insurance is recommended.
Be prepared for changes: Travel will look different

• TSA is enforcing social distancing; using fresh gloves for each screening; allowing one hand sanitizer up to 12 ounces per passenger; encouraging travelers to pack carry-on food, medicines, toiletries and other liquids in an easily accessible and clear plastic bag.

• Check covid19.alaska.gov, and your airline’s website before you travel.

• Only those traveling should enter the airport, unless accompany minors or others in need of assistance.
Individual responsibility remains key

- Stay home if you feel sick. **Do not travel even if you have mild symptoms.**
- Your behavior while traveling is the most significant factor affecting your health and the health of others.
- Most airlines require masks.
- Wash your hands. Hand sanitation is available throughout our terminals.
- Your behavior is contagious. Be a good example.
Revisions to Mandate 10: Safe Travels Alaska

Travelers fall into four categories:

1. Tested within 72 hours to five days prior to departure:
   a. May enter Alaska upon showing negative PCR test result for COVID-19
   b. May not enter Alaska if they tested positive
   c. Travelers with a negative test within 5 days of arriving in Alaska will be retested at the airport and should minimize interactions with others until the results of the second test are available.

2. Tested on arrival:
   a. Upon arrival in Alaska may be tested for COVID-19 and register with the testing site
   b. Must maintain quarantine at their own expense until test results are known
   c. If positive for COVID-19, must isolate for duration of illness at their own expense

3. Critical infrastructure workforce:
   a. Must abide by their company’s community protective plan on file with the state

4. None of the above (no prior test result, decline testing, and not a critical infrastructure worker)
   a. Must undergo 14-day quarantine at their own expense
Revisions to Mandate 10: Safe Travels Alaska

All travelers:

• Should educate themselves about the requirements to safely travel in Alaska, including checking with local jurisdictions that may have their own restrictions.
• Must complete and sign the Alaska Travel Declaration Form (parents/guardians must sign for minor children).
• Will be provided a voucher for a COVID-19 test and follow-up testing.
• Will receive educational materials about how to be a responsible tourist and limit exposure.
Revisions to Mandate 10: Safe Travels Alaska

Main ports of entry will have an in-person COVID-19 educator who:

• Collects completed declaration forms.
• Performs or directs travelers to immediate testing.
• Provides educational materials including:
  • Contact investigation log
  • Face covering
  • Local rules and restrictions
  • Limiting exposures for 14 days
Know before you go

Plan ahead and get tested before you travel. Advance planning is the best way to ensure a safe and successful trip.

- **Test for COVID-19 before you go.** Get PCR testing between 72 hours to 5 days prior to travel so results are available to upon entry into Alaska.
- **Protect your trip.** Medical, evacuation and travel insurance are recommended.
- **Prepare for your trip.** Minimize your exposure before you travel by limiting interactions in public settings for 14 days.
- **Check local restrictions:** Different communities have different rules. Educate yourself before traveling to a community.
Know before you go

• **Masks, social distancing & good hygiene are strongly recommended.** Bring a face covering with you; some places require their use. Stay 6 feet away from others and wash your hands often.

• **Enroll with an online COVID tracker** to know if you were exposed to COVID and record your exposures.

• **Stay home if you’re sick or at risk for COVID.** If you’re ill or have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 in the last 14 days, postpone your trip until later.

• **Come prepared.**
  • Sign up with our public health system for support if you become ill.
  • Enroll in testing registration before travel
  • Have a plan if you get sick or have a close exposure to a positive COVID patient including a place to stay for 14 days post exposure
  • Obtain fishing license online before you arrive
  • Have your forms and test results ready.
Welcome to Alaska! When you arrive ...

- **Turn in your completed declaration form.** Have a printed copy of your completed travel declaration form and follow directions at your arrival location to turn it in.
- **Proof of a negative PCR test** will also need to be attached to your declaration form.

All main entry ports will have an in-person educator who are collecting declaration forms, providing directions for testing if needed, handing out educational materials and 2nd test voucher.
Welcome to Alaska! When you arrive...

- **Testing in Alaska:** If you are not tested prior to arrival, Alaska has some testing capacity for interstate travelers, *but cannot guarantee availability*. Travelers are required to go directly to quarantine location until they receive their negative test results. If not tested, 14 days of self-quarantine are required.

- **In the event of a positive test:** Travelers who test positive in AK, must isolate at their own expense for 14 days or until a public health nurse clears them for traveling.

- **Lodging expenses:** Each traveler is responsible for their own expenses while in quarantine or isolation, including lodging.

- **Testing voucher:** Travelers will be provided with a voucher that allows them to get a free second test between 7-14 days later at testing locations across the state.
While you’re here, watch your window!

- **Limit exposure for 14 days:** A PCR test isn’t the same as quarantine. A negative test doesn’t mean you won’t develop symptoms or test positive later, so limit social interactions during your trip.
- **Avoid indoor spaces:** Use take-out and delivery options for food. Take advantage of the great outdoors and Alaska’s wide open spaces. Avoid unnecessary shopping.
- **Avoid large gatherings:** Now isn’t the time to be in a big crowd. Stay at least six feet away from others.

*Be a COVID-conscious traveler*
While you’re here, watch your window!

- **Check local restrictions:** Different communities may have different rules. Check before you go.
- **Get a second test:** Use the voucher you receive on your arrival for a free second test between 7-14 days later to make sure you’re in the clear.

*Be a COVID-conscious traveler*
The State Public Health Labs are Hiring!

State public health labs in Anchorage and Fairbanks are seeking to fill the following non-permanent positions:

- Administrative staff for entering patient demographics (names, dates of birth, etc.) into our database.
- Laboratory technicians for assisting with specimen handling, nucleic acid extractions, making media for virus transport, equipment maintenance, and inventory.
- Public Health Microbiologists, preferably certified as Med Tech or Clinical Laboratory Scientist, for performing COVID and other patient testing. Clinical experience with PCR and/or ELISA is preferred.

All positions require a 1 year commitment (paid/with benefits). Applicants must demonstrate great attention to detail and handle flexible scheduling. HIPAA training will be provided upon hire.

These positions will be posted soon on Workplace Alaska.
Thank you, everyone - small sacrifices make a big difference

- Questions regarding DHSS COVID response, including mandates and alerts, can be sent to: covidquestions@alaska.gov.

- Questions regarding DHSS data can be sent to: data.coronavirus@alaska.gov

- For general questions, contact 2-1-1 or 1-800-478-2221. Extended call center hours: 7 a.m. – 8 p.m., 7 days a week.