

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
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### Wrangell Leaders Talk Mask Mandate, Travel, Testing, and Tracing

**WRANGELL, November 24, 2020** - Members of the Wrangell Unified Command met virtually on Wednesday, November 18, to discuss the latest local and statewide plans to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. Representatives from the City and Borough of Wrangell (CBW), Wrangell Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) were joined by the local Public Health Nurse to talk about the recent community mask mandate, new travel health orders, and changes in testing and tracing protocols.

In the wake of the surge of positive COVID cases across the region and state and the Emergency Alert “Call to Action” by Governor Dunleavy, the CBW Assembly approved Ordinance 981 as part of an emergency special meeting on November 12. The ordinance requires face coverings in certain indoor settings and recommendations to reduce capacity in service industries, avoid and/or limiting the size of gatherings, and encourage testing and social distancing of intrastate travels upon arriving in Wrangell. Mayor Steve Prysunka complimented the community on compliance thus far, and supported the decision for temporary CBW building closures to protect employees and ensure the continued delivery of local services.

EOC Director Dorianne Sprehe filled the team in on the Governor’s updates to the travel order. Wrangell is classified as on the state road system due to our Alaska Marine Highway System services, and intrastate travelers coming to Wrangell must follow Health Order 8. Depending on the length of stay, a negative test may be required prior to travel or after arrival, with strict social distancing protocols in place to eliminate contact and potential spread. Potential travelers should familiarize themselves with current health orders.

SEARHC Director of Southern Primary Care Clinics Carly Allen provided an update on the free, asymptomatic testing program, which recently moved to a Saturday-only schedule. Allen stated that with the numbers the alternate testing site has been seeing, a two-day offering was no longer needed. The free, asymptomatic testing program will sunset in Wrangell and across the SEARHC Care Network on December 19 due to the exhaustion of grant funding from Indian Health Services. Tests will be prioritized for symptomatic patients and close contacts of confirmed cases, with asymptomatic tests available after December 19 for a fee and appointment only.

Regional Public Health Nurse Erin Michael clarified some of Wrangell’s positive case numbers. Recently, persons may have seen a pair of confirmed cases for Wrangell among the state’s reporting that weren’t accompanied by a local press release. Michael stated that there were two Wrangell residents who recently tested positive out-of-state and were a part of the Department of Health and Social Services



tally, but did not test positive locally and have since recovered. After a positive case on November 20, the CBW active case count sits at one.

Michael added that due to the spike in cases around the state, contact tracing is taking place in areas or instances categorized as high-risk, including congregate settings or rural communities lacking hospital services. If a person is not considered high-risk, they will be asked to notify their own close contacts and instruct to quarantine for 14-days after their last exposure. Depending on how quickly Public Health is notified of a Wrangell case, tracing may not occur locally.

As cases surge, the Unified Command intends to meet weekly to consolidate information. For resources on the local pandemic response, visit [wrangellcovid19.org](http://wrangellcovid19.org) or [covid19.searhc.org](http://covid19.searhc.org).

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