



State of Alaska Response to COVID-19

Commissioner Adam Crum
Department of Health & Social Services

Senate Judiciary Committee - January 27, 2021





Early Response by the State of Alaska

- January 27, 2020 DHSS Emergency Operations Center and State of Alaska Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) activated
- January 28, 2020 Repatriation Flight
- January 31, 2020 Federal Public Health Emergency Issued (retroactive to January 27, 2020)
- March 11, 2020 Unified Command
- Coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - Learning about the novel virus, science
 - Observations of states' response where outbreaks were occurring
 - Examining mitigation and response measures
- February 2020 Alaska State Public Health Lab could test for COVID-19
- February 2020 Preparing Alaska health care system
- March 2020 Engaged in community preparedness planning



March 2020 Alaska Disaster Declaration Legislative Action to Support Response

- Global & US Experience to Date
- State Experience to Date
- Initial Modeling
- Public Health Memo & Disaster Declaration

“Because COVID-19 is a new disease in humans, no one has an existing immunity to this virus. It appears likely that transmission can occur before the onset of symptoms. As such, some people who are infected could inadvertently transmit the virus to others. COVID-19 can cause severe disease, including pneumonia and death. Older individuals and people with serious underlying health conditions (e.g. lung disease, heart disease, or diabetes) or immune disorders are at increased risk for severe illness. There have been no confirmed cases of infection with the novel coronavirus in Alaska. For these reasons, under AS 26.23.900(2)(E), I certify that an outbreak of COVID-19 has a high probability of occurring in the near future.”

- SB 241 Approved by the Alaska Legislature
- Federal Relief Packages passed by Congress
 - March 4 - \$8 billion spending package
 - March 11 – Families First Coronavirus Response Act
 - March 29 – CARES Act



Initial Health Mandates

Date Issued	Mandate	Description
3/13/2020	001	Visitation at State Institutes, Non-Contact Student Days at Schools
3/16/2020	002	State Libraries, Archives, Museums & Residential Schools
3/17/2020	003	Statewide Closure Restaurants, Bars, Entertainment
3/17/2020	004	Travel
3/19/2020	005	Elective Medical Procedures
3/19/2020	006	Elective Oral Health Procedures
3/20/2020	007	Fairbanks North Star Borough & Ketchikan Gateway Borough – Personal Care Services and Gatherings
3/20/2020	008	Public and Private Schools
3/23/2020	009	Personal Care Services and Gatherings
3/23/2020	010	International and Interstate Travel – Order for Self-Quarantine
3/27/2020	011	Social Distancing
3/27/2020	012	Intrastate Travel – Limiting travel between communities to critical infrastructure or critical personal needs
4/9/2020	013	K-12 Public and Private Schools
4/13/2020	014	Non-congregate sheltering order
4/15/2020	015	Services by Health Care Providers
4/22/2020	016	Reopen Alaska Responsibly Plan – Phase 1-A
4/23/2020	017	Protective Measures for Independent Commercial Fishing Vessels
5/11/2020	018	Intrastate Travel

As factors improved in response, mitigation, and health care capacity, health mandates were rescinded or amended.



State Response Components

- Waiver and suspension of statutes and regulations for response
- Contracts & Procurement, and HR
 - Personal protective equipment, testing supplies, hiring temp employees
- Testing
 - Community testing sites, lab sample processing, data integrations, reporting
- Contact Tracing
 - Workforce, partnerships, IT
- Critical Infrastructure Industries & Workforce
- Partnerships & Collaborations
 - State agencies, local governments, school districts, private sectors, non-profits, advocacy groups
- Communications
 - Broad based communication strategies for mitigation measures, testing, science, health care providers, care givers, employers, educators, local leaders, school districts, families

Preparing for Vaccine – Alaska Vaccine Task Force

- May 2020, the DHSS Immunization Program and the Emergency Medical Countermeasure Program started COVID-19 vaccination planning activities.
- August 2020, Alaska COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force was established.
- Task force is co-led by DHSS and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium.
- October 16, 2020, submitted a draft Vaccination Plan to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- The State Vaccination Plan outlines the organizational approach to vaccine distribution, including provider enrollment, tracking, and public communication. The plan includes draft plans for vaccine allocation, ordering distribution and inventory management, storage, and handling.
- Alaska Vaccine Allocation Advisory Committee – convened by the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association and the Alaska Vaccine Task Force to consider the actions of the ACIP and make recommendations to DHSS on vaccine allocation.



November 16 Disaster Declaration

Public Health Memo to Governor Dunleavy regarding the status of COVID-19:

“Unfortunately, the COVID-19 emergency has not abated and we are no longer anticipating an imminent threat but instead infections are occurring in Alaska and have recently increased exponentially. Thus, a new disaster declaration is necessary as an “outbreak of disease” is occurring under AS 26.23.900(2)(E). Despite the state’s aggressive measures to contain and mitigate the effects of COVID-19, we continue to face escalating challenges with respect to COVID-19.”

As of this date:

- 48 million cases of COVID-19 confirmed worldwide
- 9 million cases in the United States. Over 235,000 Americans have died from COVID-19.
- Over 17,000 confirmed cases, and 84 deaths from COVID-19 in Alaska.

Eight Health Orders were authorized with the Issuance of the new Disaster Declaration.

November 16 Outbreak Health Orders:		
No 1	Suspension of Regulations and Statutes	Suspends certain regulations and statutes to allow agencies to best address the COVID-19 emergency
No 2	Telehealth & Courtesy Occupational Licenses	Authorizes telemedicine, access to licensees from other jurisdictions, and flexibility to certain licensing boards
No 3	Virtual Meetings & Electronic Communications for Boards	Allows business to be conducted virtually and via electronic communications for boards of corporations, non-profit, and ANCs
No 4	Non-Congregate Sheltering	Provides FEMA reimbursement eligibility for temporary sheltering and quarantine
No 5	Intrastate Travel	Provides guidelines for persons traveling to communities off the road system & the Alaska Marine Highway System
No 6	International & Interstate Travel	Provides guidelines for residents and non-residents traveling into Alaska
No 7	Online Raffles & Prize Drawings	Allows charitable gaming permittees to conduct raffles, lotteries and other contests online
No 8	Commercial Fishing Industry Protective Measures	Provides guidance on mitigation measures for the commercial fishing industry



December 15 Disaster Declaration

Public Health Memo to Governor Dunleavy regarding the status of COVID-19:

“the COVID-19 emergency has become more severe and infections are occurring in Alaska at a higher rate than ever before during this pandemic. Thus, a new disaster declaration is necessary as an “outbreak of disease” is occurring under AS 26.23.900(2)(E).”

As of December 15:

- 67 million cases of COVID-19 confirmed worldwide
- 15 million cases in the United States, with over 285,000 deaths
- 36,000 confirmed cases and 145 deaths in Alaska.
- More Alaskans died of COVID-19 in November than any other month in 2020.

The Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for Pfizer approved on December 11, 2020.

The EUA for Moderna approved on December 18, 2020.

December 15 Outbreak Health Orders:

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January 15 Disaster Declaration

Public Health Memo to Governor Dunleavy regarding the status of COVID-19:

“Vaccines are now available to Alaskans and continued facilitation of the emergency response to this public health emergency, permitted under AS 26.23.020, is critical for the successful administration of a vaccine statewide. Through the Division of Public Health and cooperating providers statewide, over 25,000 vaccination doses have been administered in Alaska, prioritizing front-line health care workers, individuals in congregate settings, and elder Alaskans. Although Alaska is administering vaccinations more quickly than most other states, no one in the state has yet completed the two-dose series, and administration is still happening more slowly than the CDC had expected.”

As of January 15:

- 88 million cases confirmed worldwide, over 21 million cases in the United States
- 365,000 Americans have died from COVID-19.
- In January 2021, a new strain of the SARS-Co-V-2 virus was identified in the United States.
- 47,000 confirmed cases and 222 deaths in Alaska.

As of January 25:

- 23.5 million vaccines administered in the United States
- 82,468 vaccines administered in Alaska – of those, 19,117 completed vaccine series

AS 26.23.020(g)(10): Allocate or redistribute, food, water, fuel, clothing, medicine, or supplies

