



Valdez COVID-19 Unified Command

NEWS RELEASE # 053

Valdez Weekly Summary

For immediate release: 12/04/2020, 5:00 p.m.

Valdez, AK – Valdez COVID-19 Unified Command provides the following local weekly summary covering developments since our last news release on Tuesday.

Valdez Case Count Updates & Trends

As of midnight on Dec. 3, Valdez has eight active resident cases and zero active non-resident cases.

Since the time of our last news release on Dec. 1, the community of Valdez received notification of three new resident cases of COVID-19. All three cases are adults, one asymptomatic and two with symptoms. Source for one case is attributed to travel outside Valdez. Source for the other two cases remain under investigation. One previously reported resident case was hospitalized on Dec. 2 due to worsening symptoms and transferred to Anchorage by medivac on Dec. 4.

These new cases bring the total Valdez resident case count to 57 cumulative cases, 48 recoveries, three cumulative hospitalizations, and one death. Total non-resident (non-Alaskan) cases identified in Valdez include 31 cumulative cases, 31 recoveries, one cumulative hospitalization, and zero deaths. To view the current Valdez case count dashboard, please visit the Valdez Unified Command website (www.valdezak.gov/COVID-19).

Public health officials continue to believe community spread is occurring in Valdez. Additional cases likely exist which have not yet been identified thru testing. Most identifiable transmissions appear to be occurring between family, friends, and co-workers. Small social events and gatherings where people let their guard down continue to be an area of concern. Additionally, new cases linked to travel outside Valdez are on the rise.

New CDC & DHSS Quarantine Guidelines

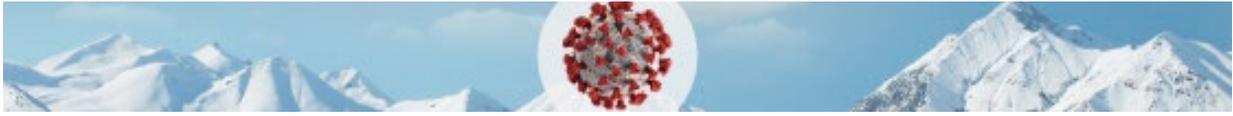
On Dec. 2, the CDC and DHSS released updated guidance on public health directed quarantine for those who may have been exposed to COVID-19.

While the full 14-day is still recommended by both CDC and DHSS, two new options now exist for those in quarantine:

- Release from quarantine after 10 days (on day 11) without testing if no symptoms have been reported during daily symptom monitoring. However, you should continue to monitor for symptoms for the full 14 days. If symptoms arise, please self-isolate and get tested promptly. To protect household members, you must continue to wear a face covering and physical distance around them for the full 14 days.
- Release from quarantine after 7 days (on day 8) following a negative COVID-19 test under specific conditions. A sample for testing should be collected within the 48 hours prior to discontinuation of quarantine. You must remain in quarantine until test results are received. Quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than day 8, even if test results come back earlier. You should continue to monitor for symptoms for the full 14 days. If symptoms arise, please self-isolate and get tested promptly. To protect household members, you must continue to wear a face covering and physical distance around them for the full 14 days.

Read additional details on new DHSS quarantine guidance here:

<http://www.dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/exposed.aspx#duration>



Valdez COVID-19 Unified Command

COVID-19 Vaccine Update

Valdez Unified Command continues to closely monitor the progress of COVID-19 vaccine development.

No COVID-19 vaccine is currently available in the United States. Multiple types of vaccine are being developed, tested, and submitted for authorization. Some types of vaccine may be ready before others.

The Valdez Unified Command's Vaccine Task Force, comprised of members of the local medical community, public health, city staff, and others, continue advance planning efforts for local COVID-19 vaccine distribution. The City of Valdez recently purchased specialized refrigeration units designed to support cold and/or frozen storage of the several different types of vaccine currently in development. Once vaccine becomes available locally, community members should anticipate distribution will mirror the processes used for flu vaccine point of dispensing practiced every fall in Valdez.

A small supply of vaccine could be available in Alaska as early as mid-December 2020, pending FDA authorization. Once approved, vaccine supply will be very limited and made available to specific populations in a phased approach as determined by federal guidance. Based upon recent communications from the CDC, healthcare workers and residents of long-term care type facilities may receive the vaccination first to preserve capacity to care for patients and protect the groups at highest risk of exposure or severe illness.

COVID-19 vaccination may require a series of immunizations given over a period of time. Current science shows immunity is not immediate following vaccination and may also require future booster immunizations. CDC states cost will not be a barrier to receiving COVID-19 vaccination. The State of Alaska is working to ensure all Alaskans have access to the vaccine at no out-of-pocket cost to the patient.

Many factors related to COVID-19 vaccine distribution remain unknown. Keeping you informed is an important part of the planning process. As you explore vaccine options for yourself and your family, we encourage you to seek out credible sources for science based information, such as CDC, DHSS, and your healthcare provider. Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/> and <http://covidvax.alaska.gov> for the latest updates.

Valdez Testing Options

Please stay home and get tested if you have even one mild symptom of COVID-19. If you think you may have been exposed to the virus, please reach out to the Valdez Public Health Nurse (835-4612) or your medical provider for guidance on next steps. Multiple options exist for both symptomatic and asymptomatic testing in Valdez. All options are by appointment only and at no out-of-pocket cost to the patient. Please visit the Valdez Unified Command website to learn more: <http://www.valdezak.gov/COVID-19>.

Help Protect Valdez

Please continue to work together to protect our community and our healthcare system. Please remain extra cautious and make thoughtful decisions as you go about your day. As we wait for a COVID-19 vaccine, please continue to wear a mask which covers your mouth and nose when you are around anyone outside of your household, even if you are outdoors or can maintain six feet of physical distance. Keep your social circle small and consistent. Try to limit your time traveling outside Valdez to only that which is necessary. Prevent additional strain on our local medical community by avoiding high risk activities which could result in injury.

The Valdez Unified Command remains committed to providing information, support, and resources for our community. For the most up-to-date local information, please continue to monitor the Valdez Unified Command website (www.valdezak.gov/COVID-19) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/ValdezUCRG).

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