



Valdez COVID-19 Unified Command

NEWS RELEASE # 055 Valdez Weekly Summary

For immediate release: 12/18/2020, 6:00 p.m.

Valdez, AK – Valdez COVID-19 Unified Command provides the following local weekly summary covering developments over the last seven days.

Valdez Case Count Updates & Trends

As of midnight on Dec. 17, Valdez has five active resident cases and zero active non-resident cases.

Since the time of our last weekly summary on Dec. 11, the community of Valdez received notification of four new resident cases of COVID-19.

The four new resident cases are all adults with symptoms. Transmission source for one patient is attributed to travel outside Valdez. Two patients are close contacts of other active cases. Transmission source for the fourth patient is unknown. One previously reported resident case was hospitalized on Dec. 12 due to worsening symptoms and transferred to Anchorage by medivac the same day.

These new cases bring the total Valdez resident case count to 65 cumulative cases, 59 recoveries, four 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).

During the last seven days, one additional Alaskan resident case was identified through testing while physically present in Valdez. However, this patient is not counted as a Valdez case as they are a resident of another Alaskan community. Instead, they are counted in the community where they reside full time. Counting patients based on their home community and not their physical location is the standard procedure used by CDC and DHSS since the beginning of the pandemic to ensure case counts are not duplicated.

Local public health officials state most identifiable transmissions appear to be either occurring between family, friends, and co-workers or during travel. Small social events and gatherings where people let their guard down continue to be an area of concern. Travel to communities outside Valdez should also be considered a high risk activity.

COVID-19 Vaccine Update

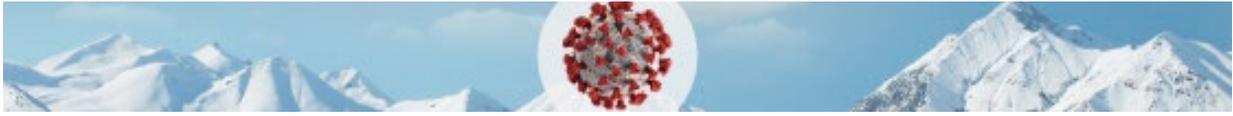
Valdez Unified Command continues to closely monitor the progress of COVID-19 vaccine development.



The Valdez Unified Command's Vaccine Task Force, comprised of members of the local medical community, public health, city staff, and others, continue efforts for local COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

Valdez received its first shipment of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on Dec. 16 for distribution thru Providence Valdez Medical Center and the DHSS Public Health Clinic. Vaccinations for those in Phase 1A began Dec. 17 and will continue into January 2021.

Under federal and state guidelines, Phase 1A currently includes hospital based front line healthcare workers at highest risk for



Valdez COVID-19 Unified Command

COVID-19 infection; long-term care facility residents and staff; EMS and firefighters who provide emergency medical services; community health aides and practitioners; and individuals who are required to perform vaccinations.

The local process used for initial Phase 1A distribution consists of several closed point of dispensing (POD) clinics, similar to what is practiced for flu vaccine each fall in Valdez. A closed POD is a smaller, focused event just for a specific population. Closed PODs are scheduled in advance and not open to the general public. Exact processes for the closed PODs will be determined by each POD manager, based on state and federal guidance.



Once vaccine becomes available in greater supply, community members should anticipate distribution and community notification will mirror the methods used for flu vaccine point of dispensing practiced every fall in Valdez. No other information is available regarding the timeline for additional distribution phases, nor is there a “sign-up” list for those who wish to receive vaccine in the future.

The City of Valdez recently purchased specialized refrigeration units designed to support cold and/or frozen storage for several different types of vaccine. The City also received COVID-19 vaccine “storage depot” designation from the State of Alaska in case storage support is needed for local partners or nearby communities moving forward.

COVID-19 immunization currently requires two doses of vaccine given over a period of time. The most recent science shows immunity is not immediate following vaccination and may also require future booster immunizations. Please monitor the Valdez Unified Command’s vaccine webpage for updates as we learn more: <http://www.valdezak.gov/595/Valdez-COVID-19-Vaccine-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 local testing 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. 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. Continue to keep your social circle small and consistent. Try to limit your time traveling outside Valdez to only that which is necessary.

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).

###

Contact: Allie Ferko, public information officer, Valdez Unified Command, PIO@valdezak.gov, (907) 202-0711.