

# Valdez COVID-19 Unified Command

## NEWS RELEASE # 061 Valdez Weekly Summary

For immediate release: 01/29/2021, 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

Since the time of our last weekly summary on Jan. 22, the community of Valdez received notification of four new resident cases of COVID-19. As of midnight on Jan. 28, Valdez has five active resident cases and zero active non-resident cases.

Of the four new resident cases, three are adults with symptoms and one is an asymptomatic minor. Two of the new patients are close contacts of other active cases. Transmission source for the other two remains under investigation.

Public health officials believe additional positive cases in the community are likely. Most recent identifiable transmissions appear to be either between family and friends or due to travel. Please continue to work together to protect our community and our healthcare system. Continue to keep your social circle small and consistent. Try to limit your time traveling outside Valdez to only that which is necessary. 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.

**Remember to stay home if you are sick** and arrange for COVID-19 testing, even if you have only one mild symptom. Testing promptly and working cooperatively with public health contact tracers helps ensure others at risk are quickly identified to prevent further spread.

### COVID-19 Vaccine Update

COVID-19 vaccines authorized for emergency use by the FDA are highly effective for the protection of the patient and prevention of severe illness. **However, it remains unknown whether vaccinated individuals can carry the virus and transmit it to others. Those vaccinated must continue to take precautions to protect those around them**, including physical distancing, wearing a mask, and practicing good hygiene.

COVID-19 vaccine is allocated in Valdez based upon state and federal guidelines. Local officials do not make allocation decisions. Valdez Unified Command's Vaccine Task Force, comprised of members of the local medical community, public health, city staff, Valdez Native Tribe representatives, and others, work together to determine logistics for vaccine distribution based upon state/federal allocation guidelines.

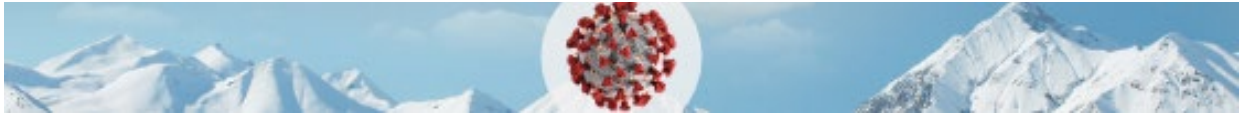
The following people are currently eligible for vaccine under state guidelines:

- **Phase 1A – All Tiers:** Healthcare/medical workers and long term care residents.
- **Phase 1B – Tier 1:** Individuals age 65 and older.

Following extensive outreach, public health officials believe most healthcare workers, long-term care residents, and individuals over 65 years of age in Valdez who desire to receive COVID-19 vaccination have successfully received their first dose. On-hand vaccine is unable to be transferred from Valdez to another location due to viability concerns. Because of this, Valdez received very limited authorization from the state to open Phase 1B – Tier 2 locally in order to distribute any remaining January first dose vaccine allocation already delivered.

- **Phase 1B – Tier 2:**
  - People living or working in other congregate settings not covered in Phase 1A.
  - Frontline essential workers who are aged 50 years and older and whose work related duties must be performed on-site and involve being in close proximity (less than six feet) to the public or co-workers.

Specific “frontline essential workers” eligible under this tier are clearly defined by the State of Alaska. Visit <http://covidvax.alaska.gov> to view the definition and list of examples. **Please note, not all “essential businesses” are included in this tier, so please double check the list to determine eligibility.** If you have eligibility questions, please contact the DHSS Valdez Public Health Clinic at 907.835.4612 for clarification.



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Over the past week, Valdez Public Health conducted direct outreach to Valdez businesses and organizations with employees eligible under Phase 1B – Tier 2 and appointments filled quickly. As of Jan. 29, all on-hand first dose vaccine has been distributed. Valdez must now wait along with the rest of the state to vaccinate the remainder of those eligible in this tier.

Valdez will likely not receive any additional first dose state vaccine allocation in February until the rest of the state completes first doses for Phase 1B – Tier 1 (Alaskans 65+). Local first dose vaccine appointments will not be available until that time, unless an individual is eligible under IHS or federal allocations. **The focus for Valdez February POD clinics will be distribution of second doses of vaccine.** No additional information is available regarding how much first dose vaccine Valdez will be allocated in future months or the timeline for vaccine distribution for future tiers of Phase 1B. No sign-up or future vaccine reservation option is currently available.

As of Jan. 29, the following cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccinations have been administered in Valdez:

- **Pfizer-BioNTech:** 186 first doses and 112 second doses.
- **Moderna:** 500 first doses.

To view the weekly local vaccine dashboard and additional information on Valdez vaccine distribution, visit <http://www.valdezak.gov/595/Valdez-COVID-19-Vaccine-Updates>

Those interested in volunteering for upcoming second dose vaccine distribution POD clinics should contact the Valdez Unified Command volunteer coordinator, Rhea Cragun, at 907.843.3416 or [rcragun@valdezak.gov](mailto:rcragun@valdezak.gov). All skill levels are welcome.

### Valdez Testing Options

If you think you may have been exposed to the virus which causes COVID-19, please reach out to the Valdez Public Health Clinic 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>.

### Valdez Economic Relief & Recovery

In addition to mitigating the health impacts of COVID-19 in Valdez, our community has been working diligently to address the economic impacts from the pandemic felt by residents, businesses, and non-profit organizations. The City of Valdez continues to accept applications for the following economic recovery programs:

- **Valdez Advertising & Marketing Grant Program:** Provides a matching grant up to \$5,000 to assist local tourism-related small businesses market their company and our community to visitors. Grant criteria and applications are available on the city website or at City Hall and due no later than 5:00 p.m. on Feb. 12 (*extended deadline*). **As of Jan. 29, a total of 21 grants have been awarded, with four additional applications in review.**
- **Valdez COVID-19 Business Economic Recovery Grant Program:** Provides financial recovery assistance to Valdez businesses negatively impacted by COVID-19, up to \$10,000 per business. Grant criteria and applications are available on the city website or at City Hall and due no later than 5:00 p.m. on Feb. 12. **As of Jan. 29, a total of nine businesses have applied for the program.**
- **COVID Conscious Business Program:** The COVID Conscious Business Program recognizes local businesses and organizations for following recommended COVID-19 safety practices to protect their workforce, their customers/clients/guests, and our community. Program applicants must earn a minimum of 85 points from a list of COVID-19 education, planning, and prevention efforts to earn the certification. **As of Jan. 29, a total of 50 local businesses have received program certification.**

To learn more about the City Economic Relief & Recovery Initiative and download applications for the current Valdez Economic Recovery programs, visit: <http://www.valdezak.gov/557/Valdez-COVID-19-Economic-Relief-Recovery>.

### More Information

For the most up-to-date local information, please continue to monitor the Valdez Unified Command website ([www.valdezak.gov/COVID-19](http://www.valdezak.gov/COVID-19)) and Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/ValdezUCRG](https://www.facebook.com/ValdezUCRG)).

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