KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH, CITY OF KETCHIKAN, AND CITY OF SAXMAN

**Questions and Answers - Facebook Live Session**
**Thursday, June 25, 2020 5:00 p.m.**

On Thursday, June 25, 2020 at 5:00 PM, the Ketchikan EOC hosted a live Q&A session with a panel of local and state officials that included:

- Dr. Anne Zink, Alaska's Chief Medical Officer
- Bryan Fisher,  SEOC Incident Commander
- Heidi Hedberg , DHSS Director of Public Health
- Tessa Walker Linderman, DNP, RN, State COVID Response Port of Entry Coordinator
- Rob Carpenter, DOT & PF Deputy Commissioner
- Abner Hoage, Ketchikan EOC Incident Commander
- Moderator:  Kacie Paxton, Ketchikan EOC Public Information Officer

The following is a summary of the questions submitted prior to the Facebook Live session, questions received during the session, and the responses provided by the panelists. This summary covers the following topics:

- Testing Data
- Testing Information
- Contact Tracing
- AMHS Travel Protocols
- Ketchikan's Out-of-State Traveler Testing Site
- State of Alaska Mandate Information
- General Information on COVID-19
- School District Plans

**Testing Data**

1. **Please explain how the Case Count Dashboard for both the state and Ketchikan works. Why do we see different numbers reflected on the state's dashboard versus the local dashboard?**

The Ketchikan EOC has updated its COVID-19 Testing and Case Count Dashboard to provide more insight on non-resident/resident testing results. The Ketchikan Testing and Case Count Dashboard includes numbers for tests administered, tests pending, cumulative positive cases, resident  and non-resident cases, close contact/travel related/non-travel related cases, recovered cases, and hospitalizations.

The State of Alaska's has its own COVID-19 Testing and Case Count Dashboard, it is used to display data as well as feed raw data into local dashboards and national dashboards.  The State's dashboard operates on a 14-day rolling average of percent positivity of COVID-19 cases, to assess the ongoing risk in each geographical area.  As the State of Alaska receives its numbers

after tests have been completed, resulted, and reported – their data tends to lag behind locally reported data.

**<u>Testing Information</u>**

1. **What is the timeframe for testing positive to a virus, and why can there be different results depending on when the test is taken?**

A Nasal PCR Test, which is the most common test administered in the State of Alaska, picks up pieces of the virus from your nose to run through a testing machine. Different machines require different concentrations of the virus to provide a positive result. Instances such as improper specimen collection, an abnormal medium or swab for the specimen, and length of time before it reaches the testing operator can all have a deteriorating effect on the sample – which can affect the results. Depending on where you are in the time frame of the disease can also impact your test results. If you are tested later or earlier on during your infection, you may not have enough of a viral load to test positive.

2. **I've heard that those nasal swabs hurt. Is there an alternative way to do the testing that isn't painful?**

Many people have different reactions to the nasopharyngeal swab, a common swab administered through the nose, used for COVID-19 testing. The swab is not supposed to hurt, but it may be uncomfortable. In order to collect enough cells and fluids, the swab must be inserted along the entire passageway that connects the base of the nose to the back of the throat to get a good specimen. As the body is not used to having an object in that area, it creates a lot of very odd sensations.

3. **If I test positive and test again a couple days later with a negative result does that mean the first test was a false positive?**

No. There are many reasons that a second COVID-19 test could be negative. Foremost, the first test could have been taken during the end of the course of the virus, leading to the second test being taken after the disease had run its course and would no longer be present in the body. It is also possible that a second test did not pick up enough of a sample to test positive, even if the virus is still present. Testing results as well as a patient's clinical history are both used to understand where a patient is within the disease process.

4. **Unless someone takes a rapid COVID-19 test, it is unlikely that a person will receive their test results in less than 5 days. How can someone that is not symptomatic get tested?**

Communities have been tasked to provide a wide range of testing options. For example, Ketchikan is operating a Drive-up Testing Site that is available to anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, and is also open to certain asymptomatic individuals, including: those who have health conditions; are age 65 or older; health care workers or care providers; first responders; or those who have recently traveled.. At home testing options are also available for people who

need results within 24-48 hours. The State of Alaska has made testing guidelines for individual communities incredibly broad to allow for asymptomatic testing.

**5. What testing options are currently available in Ketchikan?**

The Ketchikan EOC has two COVID-19 test sites – the Free Drive-Up Testing Site at Berth 3 and the Ketchikan International Airport Test Facility. Here's when and how to use each one:

The Free Drive-Up Testing Site: the Drive-Up Testing Site at Berth 3 is operated on Wednesday and Thursday from 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM and is primarily for individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19. Individuals who have recently traveled, believe they have been exposed to the virus, are considered "high risk," or work with someone "high risk" are also encouraged to use the Drive-Up Testing Site. This site offers a nasal swab PCR test, and there is no fee. Test results can take anywhere from 3 to 7 days to come back.

Ketchikan International Airport Test Facility is for
- Travelers arriving from out-of-state on North bound flights
- Voucher retesting 7-14 days after arrival
- This site offers nasal swab PCR test, and there is no fee. With a voucher, travelers can return to the Ketchikan Airport for the follow-up test or contact another health care provider in Ketchikan to see if the provider will accept the voucher. Follow-up voucher testing (bring the voucher) at the airport does not require an appointment; an individual can simply show up Monday through Sunday during the following times:
  7:30 AM - 9:00 AM
  11:00 AM - 2:00 PM
  4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

*Note: These are the new times as adjusted on July 1, 2020.*

Testing is also available from local health care providers such as Creekside Clinic, Peace Health Medical Center, KIC, Ketchikan Public Health, Legacy, Northway Family Healthcare, and Polaris Health Group.

**Contact Tracing**

**1. What criteria does a person doing contract tracing use to determine if someone has been in close contact with a person who has tested positive for the virus?**

If you've been identified as a "close contact" of an infected person, you will receive a call from a public health nurse. "Close contact" is defined as having been within 6 feet of an infected individual for 10-15 minutes or longer, or if you've been coughed or sneezed on by that person.

If you feel you have been exposed and haven't received a call, consider taking the following measures:
- Hunker down if you are able to do so
- Limit your social contacts for 14 days

- Stay at least 6 feet away from others
- Wear a cloth covering when in public
- Monitor for symptoms and if you start feeling sick, no matter how mild, isolate yourself and call your provider to get tested

2. **When someone coming in from the Lower 48 tests positive, shouldn't everyone who was on the plane with them be contacted to quarantine or be tested?**

"Close contact" has been defined federally as being within 6 feet of an identified positive case for a set duration of time. As the state does not have access to a commercial airline's manifest, they work closely with their federal partners to access that information to identify and contact the people who were sitting in close contact with the identified positive case. Not everyone on the plane will be contacted by public health, just those sitting within close parameters of the infected person.

**AMHS Travel Protocols**

1. **Which AMHS ferry trips require a pre-travel test, and when does it need to be done?**

Shorter-duration and day-boat passenger travel DO NOT require COVID-19 testing or a sworn statement of a 14-day quarantine.

For passengers departing from Bellingham, Washington, a COVID-19 test must be administered within 72-hours of the day of departure, and a negative result must be presented upon checking in at the terminal or boarding for travel. Passengers already in Alaska that choose to travel on longer-duration routes within Alaska and/or terminating in Bellingham, Washington, must select one of the following two options:
- A COVID-19 test must be administered within five days of the departure date, and a negative result must be presented upon checking in at the terminal or boarding for travel.
- OR a sworn statement signed that affirms the traveler has followed quarantine standards for at least 14 days preceding the date of travel. Forms will be available on the AMHS website and available at check in.

A longer duration travel is defined as any itinerary originating in Alaska that concludes in Bellingham, Washington, a voyage across the Gulf of Alaska, to or from the Aleutian Chain that includes the port of Kodiak.

2. **What paperwork do AMHS travelers need to complete?**
AMHS Travelers are required to fill out one of two forms. One is a pre-travel screening document for those traveling within the state of Alaska, asking about symptoms and other COVID-19 related questions that will require "no" answers to continue to board. The second is the State of Alaska's out-of-state travel declaration form which requires proof of a negative COVID-19 test result.

3. **What if a negative test result is not received by the time a traveler is scheduled for departure on the AMHS?**

At this time, travelers coming via Bellingham will be denied service. This is due to the logistics of ferry-based travel and the risk of exposure to an entire vessel's crew and its passengers. Within the state, travelers are allowed to sign an affidavit stating they have been in quarantine for 14 days prior to travel. The state of Alaska is working to provide testing options to allow for the 72 hour results, which also includes FDA-authorized home-collection COVID-19 tests.

**Ketchikan Traveler Testing Site**

1. **Is rapid testing an option for the airport testing site? What type of test is currently being used?**

The airport testing site uses a standard PCR test which is then sent off to one of two laboratories, Quest Labs and the University of Washington. Rapid testing is not currently an option due to the lack of testing re-agent and other supplies, in order to keep up with testing demand at the airport. The airport testing site administers on average 42 tests a day, which is more than local testing labs can currently handle.

2. **Please describe how the process works for out of state travelers to be greeted, screened, and tested when they arrive at the Ketchikan airport.   Is there an actual person at the airport who checks each passenger's paperwork upon arrival? Shouldn't the paperwork be checked inside of security as they walk off the airplane?**

The traveler testing site is located on the Ketchikan side of the airport ferry terminal. Before a passenger disembarks from the aircraft in Ketchikan, they will have already received the travel declaration form from the airline and many complete the paperwork before they leave the plane.

Stationed in the baggage claim area and at every exit of the Ketchikan Airport terminal, is a greeter to meet each north bound flight passenger to help direct individual travelers and provide information on the testing process. After speaking with a greeter, travelers with proof of a negative COVID-19 test and completed travel declaration form are prompted to drop their forms at a receptacle in the airport.

For those opting to receive a free COVID-19 traveler test at the Airport Testing Facility, once they get off the ferry, proceed to a testing screener, get in line for a PCR nasal swab, and turn in their travel declaration form upon completion of their COVID-19 test.

Those who choose to complete a 14-day quarantine can turn in their paperwork on either the airport or Ketchikan side.

## State of Alaska Travel Mandate Information

1. **Per the interstate travel protocols, why are flight passengers provided a voucher for a second test? Why take a second test 7-14 days after the first, even if the first was negative?**

Testing strategies by the state of Alaska are based around time frames of symptom onset and virus detection. At 5 days, only 50% of those infected will be showing symptoms, while at 10 days 90%-95% will be showing symptoms. Travelers can be exposed to the virus during transit, so by testing 7-14 days after arrival, there will be a higher percentage of positive cases.

2. **If someone is traveling to Seattle for a medical procedure and will be there for less than 24 hours, when should they be tested? Before or after they travel, considering as both are within 24 hours?**

As described in Mandate 10, there is an option on the travel declaration form for travelers leaving the state for less than 24 hours stating that they do not need to receive a negative COVID-19 test result or follow a 14-day quarantine upon return. Instead they are asked to minimize interactions and monitor for symptoms for up to 14 days of their arrival.

3. **Why doesn't the state of Alaska implement and strictly enforce a 14-day quarantine for all arriving travelers, like what is being done in New Zealand and Western Australia?**

As Alaska is a state and not a country, there are restrictions on what a state government can require of US travelers. Due to the commerce clause in the US Constitution, the state of Alaska is prohibited from violating a US citizens' right to privacy. Instead, the state government has shifted to test-based travel requirements to help curb the spread of the virus from travelers arriving in our state.

4. **For travel mandate 10, what are the requirements for interstate and intrastate travel? Why are there differing restrictions for travel within the state?**

The state of Alaska opened up intrastate travel to help minimize the economic impacts of COVID-19. Other than Hawaii, most states have a much higher case count than Alaska. State officials looked at risks associated with travelers coming into the state versus travel within the state, as they found intrastate travel to be lower risk – fewer restrictions were implemented. At this time, the state is in support of local governments to establishing their own travel restrictions, allowing them to impose stricter restrictions based on their community needs. Many communities continue to have a 14-day quarantine required upon arrival for all intrastate and interstate travelers. Ketchikan does not have any additional restrictions for travelers but has expanded their testing parameters to include asymptomatic individuals who have recently traveled.

## General Information on COVID-19

### 1. Does mask wearing decrease the need for social distancing when indoors?

Dr. Zink relates mask wearing to wearing a seatbelt, although it might not prevent someone's death, it will reduce their chances of dying. Seatbelts are part of a much bigger set of tools that include speed limits, separate highways, and airbags. Masks and social distancing are much like airbags and seatbelts, where your chances are better if you use both. Masks along with keeping 6 feet apart from others, hand washing, and increased hygiene practices are used to minimize the risk of exposure to the disease.

### 2. What is the concept behind herd immunity and is this a viable option for our community to deal with COVID-19?

Herd immunity applies when enough people have been infected and recovered from the disease, so that the virus can no longer spread from person to person. Most times herd immunity in humans can be attributed to the use of vaccines.

There are many diseases to which humans have never developed herd immunity to, such as small pox. The key factor in herd immunity is that the immunity needs to last. One of the major concerns with the Coronavirus is that with common cold viruses like COVID-19, the immunity only lasts 8 months to a year and half. Because of these factors, rapid herd immunity is not being considered a viable option to combat the coronavirus.

Combined with what little research we have on the long term effects of the disease, the amount of deaths it would cause, and the overwhelming of our healthcare system – rapid herd immunity is not a viable option unless it can be done so with vaccinations. At the moment there are 114 different vaccines being developed, a few of which are already in phase two of development. The state of Alaska is being told to expect a viable vaccination option by fall or winter.

## School District Plans

### 1. What are the state-wide and local directives for opening schools in the fall? Is it realistic to expect that there would be no new cases in order for school to resume?

Education should be occurring across every community regardless of how things progress with the pandemic. Each school district has been tasked with developing an educational plan for every scenario, based on the severity of the outbreak of the disease.

Severity of the situation is broken down into three categories, few to no new cases, moderate, and severe. Each district will need to work with their local superintendent, principals, and public health to make the best decisions for their community – but still continuing to make education a constant for all students.

From a medical standpoint there is not much known about the transmission of the disease as it relates to children and what part they play as an accelerating factor for the disease. So far numbers are showing the spread of the disease being less attributed to younger children and linked more to young adults.

It is also important to note that a third of Alaskans have an attribute that marks them as high risk for this disease, giving us more reason to keep this disease at bay. In the meantime, the CDC is coming out with additional guidance for schools and education as this is a country wide issue.

The actions we all take now to combat this disease - such as minimizing social interactions, hand washing, and mask wearing will keep our kids safe in the fall/winter. The Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District is continuing to work with the local EOC and public health to develop their plans and risk assessments.

**<u>Summary and Resources:</u>**

We urge anyone with any COVID-19 symptoms to seek testing. If you experience symptoms, contact your regular provider or our testing hotline at 247-TEST (8378).

To find available testing sites, view the Testing Sites Locator at:  https://coronavirus-response-alaska-dhss.hub.arcgis.com/app/2d92b77bc8044329a1ee3954b063bd8c

There are FDA-authorized at-home test kits that may soon be available to travelers:
- Pixel system from LabCorp https://www.pixel.labcorp.com/at-home-test-kits/covid-19-test
- Everlywell COVID-19 Test Home Collection Kit https://www.everlywell.com/products/covid-19-test/
- Vault Health COVID-19 Testing https://www.vaulthealth.com/covid
- Picture Genetics COVID-19 Testing https://www.picturegenetics.com/covid19

All arriving passengers must complete the travel declaration form.  The declaration form, Health Mandate 10.1, and additional information for travelers is available at: https://covid19.alaska.gov/travelers/

AMHS COVID-19 protocols for passengers are available at http://dot.alaska.gov/amhs/covid19.shtml

Citizens are encouraged to submit questions related to COVID-19 in Ketchikan and local resources to:  covidquestions@kgbak.us.

Information on the EOC's response to COVID-19 in Ketchikan is updated daily on the COVID-19 Response page at https://www.kgbak.us/913/COVID-19-Response. Additional current information is available on the State of Alaska's website at www.covid19.alaska.gov.

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