



**Yukon-Kuskokwim
HEALTH CORPORATION**

Working Together to Achieve Excellent Health

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 22, 2020

Contact:

Mitchell Forbes, Public Information Officer

Office: 907-543-6036

Email: mitchell_forbes@ykhc.org

YKHC encourages all Alaska Airlines travelers to remote locations be tested for COVID-19

Governor Dunleavy announced that Alaska will begin Phases 3 and 4 of reopening on Friday, May 22, amid the global novel coronavirus pandemic. As the Governor begins lifting statewide restrictions and relaxing health mandates that help prevent the spread of COVID-19, YKHC urges the public to remain vigilant about how easily the virus can be transmitted and to participate in proactive testing when possible.

In early April, YKHC staff began providing symptom and exposure-risk screening for passengers arriving from Anchorage at the Bethel airport. On April 23, YKHC expanded this initiative and began offering on-site COVID-19 testing for arriving passengers, which continues today. YKHC has tested 1,592 people in Bethel and throughout YK Delta villages, of which 331 were tested at the Bethel airport.

“YKHC encourages all businesses and organizations, that have employees who travel from out-of-region to Bethel, to urge their staff to volunteer for free COVID-19 testing upon arrival at the Bethel airport,” said YKHC President & CEO Dan Winkelman. “We also encourage all passengers, whether local residents or visitors, to agree to free COVID-19 testing at the Bethel airport.”

“Because of the remoteness of our region, COVID-19 has come to the YK Delta due to passengers who travel by air from out-of-region,” Winkelman continued. “Governor Dunleavy should strongly urge passengers to volunteer for COVID-19 testing at remote airports when they are available as he eases mandates. Testing is a core public health strategy to detect, isolate and trace new cases and I look forward to the day that 100% of Alaska Airlines’ passengers are tested when arriving to Bethel.”

“As Alaska Airlines increases their weekly Anchorage-Bethel flight schedule to seven flights per week, we know the risk for COVID-19 exposure will increase,” Winkelman concluded. “YKHC thanks Alaska Airlines for allowing us to use space in their facility to conduct this important public health effort.”

###