Known COVID-19 Case in Bethel

Today, Wednesday, June 10, YKHC was notified of an individual who tested positive for COVID-19 in Anchorage and subsequently traveled to Bethel. The individual was not notified about the positive test result until after travel occurred. The individual is not a resident of Bethel, and therefore per State reporting protocols, will not be counted in the YK Delta positive case count.

YKHC is working with the State of Alaska Section of Epidemiology to conduct contact tracing, follow-up testing, and ensure precautions are taken to protect people the individual may have been in close contact with. By early this afternoon, YKHC identified and contacted all close contacts to offer testing and provided instruction to continue self-isolating for 14 days.

YKHC was notified by the individual that they wore a mask on the flight to Bethel, when in public, and opted for voluntary testing upon arrival at the Bethel airport. We would like to thank the individual for being responsible for the health of others by getting tested for COVID-19 before travel, again as part of YKHC’s testing program at the Bethel airport, and for wearing a mask in our community. These actions are a model we encourage the public to follow.

While testing is a core public health strategy to detect, isolate and trace new cases, current airport testing in Bethel remains at 25-60% of arriving passengers who opt for free, voluntary testing. “We continue to encourage all passengers, whether local residents or visitors, to agree to free COVID-19 testing at the Bethel airport,” said YKHC President & CEO Dan Winkelman. “I look forward to the day that 100% of Alaska Airlines’ passengers are tested when arriving to Bethel.”

YKHC encourages the public to practice these known protective measures, which helps to prevent spread of the novel coronavirus. Additional protective measures include regular handwashing, physical distancing from anyone not in your same household, and disinfecting high-touch surfaces in your home.

YKHC has been operating under an Incident Command System (ICS) since March 18. The ICS is a management system designed to enable effective and efficient company-wide incident management by integrating a combination of personnel, procedures, resources, and communications operating within a common organizational structure. The ICS is making all decisions related to COVID-19 response and it will be active until further notice.

YKHC hosts a bi-weekly call for our tribal councils to receive updates regarding our COVID-19 response. The next call is Thursday, June 18. Tribes who are not already attending these calls can email publicrelations@ykhc.org to receive call-in information.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include a fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, diarrhea, and diminished sense of taste or smell. If you have these symptoms, do not go to your village clinic or to the emergency room in Bethel. Instead, call your village clinic or in Bethel call 543-6949 so a health care provider can assist you.

Get the latest information on COVID-19 from YKHC at www.ykhc.org/covid-19.