

Adam Crum
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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Clinton Bennett, DHSS, 907-269-4996, clinton.bennett@alaska.gov

79 crew members of seafood processing vessel test positive for COVID-19

July 21, 2020 ANCHORAGE – Upon arrival into Dutch Harbor on July 16, crew members of the American Triumph, a seafood processing vessel that is part of the American Seafoods’ fleet, were tested for COVID-19 after reporting symptoms of the disease.

Testing of all crew members was conducted by the Iliuliuk Family & Health Services (IFHS) Clinic at the U.S. Coast Guard dock in Dutch Harbor in a safe and secure manner. After all testing was completed July 18, 85 crew members out of a total of 119 tested positive for COVID-19. Six of the 85 had previously tested positive for the virus, so they will not be counted as new cases. None are Alaska residents. Additional cases may be identified among quarantined individuals in the coming weeks.

“This is Alaska’s largest discrete COVID-19 outbreak to date,” said Dr. Joe McLaughlin, Alaska’s State Epidemiologist. “The exceptionally high attack rate among crewmembers underscores how efficiently this virus spreads in congregate settings.”

All of the crew members have been kept either onboard the vessel or under isolation or quarantine while in Unalaska for medical evaluation. The Unalaska Unified Command has determined the level of risk to the community of Unalaska to be low based on the effective isolation of positive individuals.

Throughout the weekend, American Seafoods, City of Unalaska, IFHS Clinic, City of Seward, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Municipality of Anchorage and the Anchorage Health Department have all been working very closely with the DHSS Section of Epidemiology and Alaska Unified Command on the testing, medical support and logistics of this outbreak. Given the number of crew who tested positive and the limited medical capabilities in Unalaska, the positive crew members remained on the vessel and are being transported to Anchorage for isolation.

Due to the challenges of docking at the Port of Alaska in Anchorage, the vessel will dock in Seward where the crew will then be immediately transferred via ground transportation to Anchorage. Medical staff will accompany the crew to provide medical care and monitoring during the trip from Unalaska to Seward, a route that will allow for any individuals who may require hospitalization to be evacuated directly to Anchorage from the vessel. The crew members who tested negative have already been flown via charter aircraft to Anchorage where they will be monitored in quarantine.

“This has truly been a group effort from many community partners over the past several days,” said Dr. Anne Zink, Alaska’s Chief Medical Officer. “I appreciate everyone involved in the numerous phone calls, meetings and conversations we’ve had as we worked through the safest options for these sick crew members and the communities of Unalaska, Seward and Anchorage.”

American Seafoods is providing a secure isolation location in Anchorage for all crew members to complete their quarantine or isolation periods, which includes medical services, security and any wrap-around support services the crew will need during that period, such as food and other supplies. Crew members will not be allowed to leave their location during their quarantine or isolation periods.

Core strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 include the following:

- Stay six feet or more away from non-family members.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Wipe down surfaces frequently.
- Wear a face covering when in a public setting and in close contact with others.
- Stay home if you are sick and get tested for COVID-19 if you have any symptoms.
- Be mindful and respectful to everyone, including seniors and anyone with existing health conditions who are most vulnerable to this virus.

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