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Department of Health
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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Update on the flight evacuating U.S. citizens from Wuhan that will refuel in Anchorage

Jan. 28, 2020 – The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) is working closely with federal, Tribal, and local partners to assist with the repatriation effort of approximately 200 passengers flying from Wuhan, China to California. The airplane is scheduled to arrive at the Ted Stevens International Airport North Terminal for refueling this evening. The section of the North Terminal that will be used for this event is not currently accessible to the public and is isolated from the South Terminal. As such, this event will have no impact on regularly scheduled flights.

All passengers were screened for signs or symptoms of respiratory illness multiple times prior to departure from Wuhan. Passengers were only allowed to board the aircraft if they did not have any symptoms of respiratory illness, such as fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.

Passengers will be disembarking the aircraft in Anchorage for three reasons: to assure passenger safety during refueling of the aircraft, to undergo further health screening, and to clear U.S. Customs. The airport health screening will be coordinated by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) staff. Any passenger(s) who are found to have cough, fever, or shortness of breath in Anchorage will be further assessed by CDC and DHSS medical experts. If the medical team determines that one or more passengers require medical care, the team will work with federal, state, and local partners to determine where that care will occur (i.e., at an Alaska hospital or elsewhere in the Lower 48), on a case-by-case basis.

“The safety of all Alaskans, those assisting them, and the passengers on the plane remain our top priority,” said Dr. Anne Zink, Chief Medical Officer, DHSS. “We have been working diligently with federal, state, and local partners to assure that this effort goes smoothly. Bringing these people home to the United States is an important mission and we are fortunate to have strong health partners in Alaska with the capacity to assist these U.S. citizens in their effort to return home.”

The people who will be working directly with passengers this evening at the North Terminal include health screening staff, U.S. Customs and Border Protection staff, and one ground handler. All staff will be wearing CDC-recommended personal protective equipment.

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