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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Haines, Alaska March 20, 2020 - The Haines Borough Emergency Operations Center (EOC) would like to outline a few details about our local response as it stands today. In this press release we will:

- Clarify local testing protocol
- Reassert the state's travel protocol
- Discuss grocery store supply in the upcoming weeks
- Highlight the volunteer efforts happening

Local Testing Protocol

The SEARHC Haines Health Center is providing COVID-19 testing as necessary. The testing site is located at the back of the clinic. It is manned by a SEARHC clinician in approved personal protection equipment (PPE), including mask, goggles, gloves, and gown. **Patients can not show up at the testing site without an appointment.** Please call the clinic at 766-6300 to discuss if you need testing. If a patient meets the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) approved guidelines, they will be scheduled for a drive-by appointment during regular business hours. Patients will be tested for influenza, and if negative for influenza, be administered a COVID-19 test.

CDC guidelines state that patients must be exhibiting symptoms of COVID 19 (fever and cough, or shortness of breath) and meet the current clinical criteria, including close contact with a confirmed case; travel outside of Alaska within 14 days; or determined to be a high-risk patient. This same method of testing is being used in Sitka, Juneau, Wrangell and Klawock. There are approximately 1,300 specimen collection kits for COVID-19 available in the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium system with more arriving every day.

Travel and self-quarantining protocol

The Haines EOC recognizes the current state mandate for travelers entering Alaska available here: <https://tinyurl.com/vbc5ymc>. All state health mandates regarding COVID-19 are available here: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/default.aspx>

While these precautions are mandated by the governor, many community members are taking additional precautions and we applaud these efforts. We support and encourage any and all efforts to practice safe distancing and self-quarantining in order to protect our community from the spread of COVID-19.

Every arriving passenger on the planes and ferries are now being handed a flyer with the state mandate for travelers and with information about resources in Haines.

Grocery store supply

In the next week or two there will be a perception that groceries supplies are low. We have assurances that this situation is temporary. Because of several days of “panic buying” here and in the Lower 48, suppliers are backed-up with requests and were not able to fill all orders from every store. However, the local grocers are confident this is temporary and there is no cause for concern. We request you continue shopping normally and not horde products. The local grocery stores may implement limits on how many of certain items customers will be allowed to buy during the next week or two. Please consider your neighbors, especially those on fixed incomes, who cannot buy weeks’ worth of groceries at one time. Please also consider your risk level when shopping; the stores are less busy in the early morning hours. Those are times when elders may be more comfortable shopping because it will be easier to practice safe distancing from others.

Volunteer efforts

The Haines Support Chain Initiative kicked off on Thursday evening. This effort connects volunteers with those who may need, or choose to, practice self-quarantine and social distancing. Individuals and families may sign up for assistance with grocery shopping or delivery, medication or mail pick up, and many other types of errands. Volunteers are organized by neighborhoods and areas of the Chilkat Valley, including up the highway. You can find the Haines Support Chain Initiative at <https://tinyurl.com/t8n3vez>.

About the Haines EOC

The Haines Borough (“Borough”) is working diligently to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community. The Emergency Operations Center has been meeting daily to update response protocols with the latest information from the CDC, State of Alaska and local health officials. The EOC team will continue to meet daily or as often as the situation warrants. The Borough will continue to provide daily updates no later than 3 pm and more often throughout the day if information significantly changes. All announcements will be posted on the Haines Borough website and the “Haines Borough COVID-19 Information Page at facebook.com/hainescovid19.

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