



## CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL

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P.O. BOX 531 (907)-874-2381  
Wrangell, AK 99929 FAX (907)-874-3952

### NEWS RELEASE

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### CORONAVIRUS UPDATE: PREVENTATIVE EMERGENCY DECLARATION

Wrangell, AK – Two new cases of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) have been identified in Fairbanks, bringing the total known cases in Alaska to three. Conditions and guidance regarding COVID-19 is changing by the hour. Please understand the following facts about COVID-19 and Wrangell:

Persons Most at Risk: 1) Persons age 60 and older; 2) Persons with underlying health conditions.

Wrangell's Age: Wrangell has one of, if not the, highest population of Senior Citizens, per capita, in Alaska. That means a significant percentage of the Wrangell population is within the category most at risk for COVID-19.

COVID-19 Complications: One of the complications of COVID-19 can be respiratory distress, or very serious trouble breathing.

Medically Assisted Breathing: When persons are in serious respiratory distress a ventilator is commonly used to medically assist breathing.

Capacity of Wrangell Medical Center: Wrangell Medical Center only has three ventilators.

Overwhelming Local Care Capacity: If COVID-19 comes to Wrangell, it will only take four people with serious respiratory complications from the virus to potentially overwhelm the capacity of Wrangell Medical Center. The continued spread of COVID-19 in other locations may mean Medievac options for treatment and care at another hospital in Alaska or Seattle are not available and care on the island is the only option.

For the health of our citizens and to mitigate overwhelming the capacity of local healthcare, the Borough Assembly will be meeting this afternoon to approve an Emergency Declaration for the community. There are still no known cases of COVID-19 on Wrangell Island. The Assembly is taking this action to open up access to state and

federal funds/resources that will be made available to fight COVID-19. The Declaration will also provide authorization for the Borough to take steps necessary to protect the public during the emergency. This may include measures instituted in other cities around the country and in Alaska, like curfews, limiting the number of people in group settings, and limiting restaurant and bar operations.

The ramifications of these actions are understood, and all decisions made will be done to maintain the well-being of our residents. Please stay tuned for regular updates, and please take everyday precautions including washing hands frequently, avoid touching surfaces, avoid touching your face, clean and disinfect your home, office and surfaces, avoid crowds, and social distance to the degree possible.

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Contact: Wrangell Borough Clerk, 907.874.2381, [clerk@wrangell.com](mailto:clerk@wrangell.com)