PRESS RELEASE

Date: 3.16.20
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Nome’s Local Emergency Planning Commission met today with its local and regional partners as part of a Unified Command in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unified Command will continue to meet on a weekly basis to discuss preparations and responses to the outbreak.

Last week, the City of Nome Common Council held an emergency meeting, where it was determined to cancel many Iditarod activities that would have drawn large crowds in enclosed spaces. As a result, the Lonnie O’Connor Iditarod Basketball Classic, the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race Musher Meet and Greet and Finishers’ Banquet, the arts and crafts show, and after school activities were canceled or postponed. The City also encouraged visitors to cancel or delay their travel plans to Nome.

In addition, the City closed most of its facilities, including the Nome Recreation Center, Old St. Joseph’s Church, the Nome Swimming Pool, the Nome Visitor’s Center, the Richard Foster Building. There is limited public access to the Mini Convention Center, which is serving as Iditarod Headquarters. City Hall and the Nome Public Safety Building are still fully operational.

On Friday, the State of Alaska announced an extended school closure for school districts across the state. Nome Public Schools’ spring break was extended by one week, through March 27th.

Other local and regional organizations are taking similar steps to reduce potential exposure of their staff and community members to COVID-19.

New guidance from the state Department of Health and Social Services asks Alaskans to comply with the following traveling recommendations.

- **Higher Risk:** For travelers returning within 14 days from the time you left an area with widespread, ongoing community spread such as Europe, China and other countries (i.e., a CDC Level 3 Travel Health Notice Area) you should:
  o Stay home and avoid contact with other household members.
  o Contact your employer and do not go to work or school for this 14-day period after you return.

- **Medium Risk:** For travelers returning within 14 days from outside of Alaska (including the rest of the United States) you should:
  o Discuss your work situation with your employer before returning to work.
  o Minimize contact with people as much as possible, self-monitor and practice social distancing.
o This may mean not going to work or school if you cannot safely be distanced from others – especially if you traveled in a location where community transmission is occurring.

o If you live in a rural area, consider limiting non-essential travel to protect your community.

o At risk individuals and communities with limited health infrastructure or high risk populations should consider limiting all non-essential travel.

Especially important for the Norton Sound/Bering Strait region is Alaska’s guidelines on social distancing, including avoiding large gatherings and crowded places, staying home if you are sick, keeping your distance from anyone who is sick, and avoiding shaking hands and hugging. The State of Alaska asks rural areas to consider limiting non-essential travel to protect their communities.