



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Alaska Tourism Industry Supports Governor's Action on COVID-19, new health orders**

**Anchorage, AK** - The Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) announced its support for Governor Mike Dunleavy's call to Alaskans to take immediate steps to curb the spread of COVID-19 and requested Alaskans do their part to ensure Alaska's tourism operators can keep open now and recover in 2021.

ATIA's first priority is the safety of Alaska's visitors, our teams, and our communities. Since the start of the pandemic, ATIA has taken steps to develop industry safety protocols and guidelines to help businesses adapt to new requirements and operating practices. Today, like many Alaskans, ATIA is deeply concerned by the rise in Alaska's COVID-19 case counts.

Governor Mike Dunleavy issued a series of [COVID-19 Outbreak Health Orders](#), effective November 16, 2020, including updated recommendations for all travelers visiting communities in Alaska that are considered on the road system.

"Alaskans have a reputation of supporting each other through good times and bad," said Sarah Leonard, ATIA President and CEO. "The best way to help our friends, neighbors, and small businesses is to wear masks, wash your hands, practice social distancing, and stay home if you have any COVID-19 symptoms."

Explore Fairbanks President and CEO and ATIA Board Director Deb Hickok said, "We are in the early throes of winter tourism season with businesses just opened or opening soon for the first time since the pandemic hit in March. It is of utmost importance we create as safe an environment possible for our guests, employees and community." Hickok noted the organization has just been awarded a grant from the Alaska Community Foundation for a promotional campaign designed to amplify best practices to local residents while encouraging them to explore locally.

Non-resident travelers to Alaska must continue to test prior to arrival in-state and within 72 hours of departure or show proof of a test taken, referenced in State of Alaska's COVID-19 Outbreak Health Order number 6. Travel remains an extremely low source for COVID-19 transmission in Alaska.

"Alaska's tourism businesses rely on visitors' perception that Alaska is safe to experience with our wide-open spaces, opportunities to view Northern Lights, and our great outdoor resources throughout all seasons. We won't be able to welcome travelers if we can't get COVID-19 under control," said Leonard.

*Alaska's leading statewide nonprofit membership organization for the Alaska travel industry.*

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Alaska's visitor industry is the state's second-largest private sector employer, supporting 1 in 10 jobs in a normal year. In 2019, more than 2.25 million visitors came to Alaska, resulting in more than \$2.7 billion in direct visitor spending and \$4 billion in total economic activity for the state.

In 2019, approximately 60% of Alaska visitors travelled by cruise ship, 36% by air, and 4% by highway/ferry. In 2020, 99.9% of scheduled cruises to Alaska cancelled, flights were reduced, and road traffic prohibited due to border closures. In an informal survey by ATIA, more than 85% of businesses reported losing more than half their anticipated revenue in 2020 as a result of COVID-19.

"We need everyone to chip in now so we can help Alaska businesses stay open and be ready for business next spring and summer," urged Bill Pedlar, ATIA Board of Directors Chair and president of Knightly Tours.

*ATIA is Alaska's largest statewide membership trade association for the travel industry and represents more than 600 plus members and businesses supporting Alaska tourism. ATIA promotes Alaska's travel industry as one of the state's major economic forces and advocates for the growth of the industry while remaining attentive to Alaska's natural environment, diverse cultures, and unique quality of life.*

For more information, visit [www.AlaskaTIA.org](http://www.AlaskaTIA.org) or contact 907.646.3307.

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