



An open letter to the Aleutians East Borough communities regarding COVID-19.

Dear Aleutians East Borough and member communities:

Along with the rest of the world, the Alaska seafood industry has been coping with the fast-paced nature of the national health pandemic created by the exponential spread of the coronavirus. Like you, we are very concerned about what the coronavirus pandemic means for our families, neighbors, and livelihoods in Alaska coastal communities, and the Alaska seafood system overall, both in the short and long term.

Our primary focus is the health and safety of all of our partner communities, including those in the Aleutian East Borough; locations where many of our processing workers, fishermen, and their families also work and live. PSPA member companies Trident Seafoods and Peter Pan Seafoods operate in several communities in the AEB region, have been communicating with communities as to their progress in mitigating risk of their operations, and have committed to sharing completed plans with communities and Tribes. The safety of the residents of AEB communities, fishermen, and processing workers is of the utmost concern.

The State of Alaska has issued several health mandates<sup>1</sup> to prevent the spread of COVID-19, several of which are directly related to travel in and out of Alaska communities. The State of Alaska has mandated a 14-day quarantine for residents, workers, and visitors upon entering Alaska (Mandate 10) and prohibited in-state travel between Alaska communities (Mandate 12) unless to support critical infrastructure or for critical personal needs. Since fishing and fish processing are considered part of the critical infrastructure workforce, workers entering the community can begin work immediately while under quarantine as long as a plan is submitted to the State of Alaska outlining how those workers will avoid the spread of COVID-19 and not endanger the communities in which they operate. To be clear, this does not mean that seafood workers coming into the community from another location are exempt from 14-day quarantine rules, only that they can work during the 14-day period while following the company's self-isolation and COVID response plan protocols.

Seafood processors and fishing vessels are submitting plans to the State of Alaska in accordance with Health Mandates 10 and 12. These company plans are informed by medical experts and detail the measures that companies are putting in place to best achieve compliance with CDC guidelines, avoid the spread of COVID-19, and minimize risk to community residents. As our individual member companies develop response plans, their goal is to keep healthy people healthy. This means implementing screening protocols for incoming employees, detection and quarantine protocols to identify and contain any suspected case of COVID-19, new cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitation standards, and best practice for distancing standards.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://gov.alaska.gov/home/covid19-healthmandates/>

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Our member companies have also been participating in a seafood industry workgroup for several weeks that was formed in response to the COVID-19 outbreak called the Alaska Fishing Industry Safety & Health Committee (AFISH Committee). Subcommittees and task force groups are organized across multiple functional topics and between participating regions and locations. This committee includes over 150 industry participants, health practitioners, and community leaders, all working to gather and share best practices in response to COVID-19 and to develop guidance protocols for vessels and onshore processors. These guidance protocols were developed with a medical risk management company that specializes in commercial maritime and remote worksites, and are posted on the State's website.<sup>2</sup>

Most urgently, we recognize the need for rural community health care systems to be better equipped to meet the needs of communities. In the coming weeks and months, PSPA will continue to closely monitor the situation, share information, and support measures that protect the health and safety of Alaska communities. PSPA will remain constant in our advocacy to the State of Alaska for FDA approved rapid point of care testing as a critical tool to assist with early and accurate detection in remote communities, including those with essential critical infrastructure industries such as the seafood industry.

We recognize the considerable stress and uncertainty that the current situation has placed upon communities. We are dedicated to doing our part to keep the communities in which we operate safe. We are committed to working with community leaders in all of the locations in which we operate and the State of Alaska to get through this together. Please contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Chris Barrows  
President  
Pacific Seafood Processors Association

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<sup>2</sup> For examples of the State of Alaska's requirement for Alaska Critical Industries COVID-19 Worker Mitigation Plans see: <https://ready.alaska.gov/Covid19-WorkerMitigationPlan>.