

Dunleavy says restaurants and other retail businesses can reopen Friday

By **Andrew Kitchenman**, Alaska Public Media & KTOO - Juneau - April 21, 2020



Dr. Anne Zink, Alaska's chief medical officer, and Gov. Mike Dunleavy speak at a news conference on Monday, April, 6, 2020. (Governor's office photo)

Gov. Mike Dunleavy announced on Tuesday that restaurants and other retail businesses can begin offering more services on Friday, if they follow certain health guidelines.

Anchorage businesses will be opening three days later, on Monday, according to Dunleavy.

Restaurants that follow the guidelines can offer dine-in services. In addition, retail stores, personal service providers like barbers, nail salons and hairdressers, and other non-essential businesses will be able to offer limited services.

"For those that have been chomping at the bit to get things open... we're headed there," Dunleavy said.

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Dunleavy said there are going to be five phases to the economic reopening. Different businesses will fall into different phases, which will be detailed on a state website, he said.

"We never thought that we could stop the virus from coming here," he said, but the state wanted to prevent it from overwhelming the health care system.

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In the phase starting on Friday, businesses that reopen will have to stay below 25% of their capacity.

Fishing charters can begin taking members of the same household. Trips with people from more than one household will be limited to 25% of a boat's capacity during the first phase.

State Health and Social Services Commissioner Adam Crum said bars, theaters, bowling alleys and bingo halls will remain closed in the first phase. Gyms will also remain closed, but outdoor fitness classes and recreation groups of fewer than 20 people can meet, as long as people stay 10 feet apart.

Other groups of less than 20 can meet for religious and other activities, as long as people from different households stay at least 6 feet apart.

In Anchorage, leaders offered few details Tuesday on the city's plan to reopen. In a statement, Mayor Ethan Berkowitz said the city will have protocols in place later this week so local businesses can operate safely.

"Provided that the health metrics continue to meet expectations, certain Anchorage businesses may start operating, with safety provisions in place, as soon as Monday, April 27," Berkowitz said.

The governor said the state will closely watch the number of COVID-19 cases in Alaska. The virus can incubate for up to two weeks, he said. The state will be examining data over a two-week period.

The second phase in reopening businesses is tentatively scheduled for May 8.

"We thought our numbers would be much higher, that hundreds of thousands of Alaskans would be infected," Dunleavy said, adding that could still happen.

The state mandate limiting international travel and travel from other states was extended until May 19. The mandates on maintaining social distancing and restricting travel inside Alaska were extended indefinitely.

Dunleavy and state health officials have said they are able to reopen parts of the economy because Alaska has had a relatively low number of cases of the virus. The number of new and active cases have been trending down.

Dr. Anne Zink, the state's chief medical officer, said there are 119 testing sites around the state.

The state announced eight more Alaskans were diagnosed with the virus through the end of the day Monday, bringing the total to 329. Four of the newly reported Alaskans are from Anchorage, two are from Juneau, one is from Eagle River and one is from Ketchikan. There were no new deaths, leaving the total at nine. About 51% of Alaskans have recovered so far.

This is a developing story. Check back for updates.

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