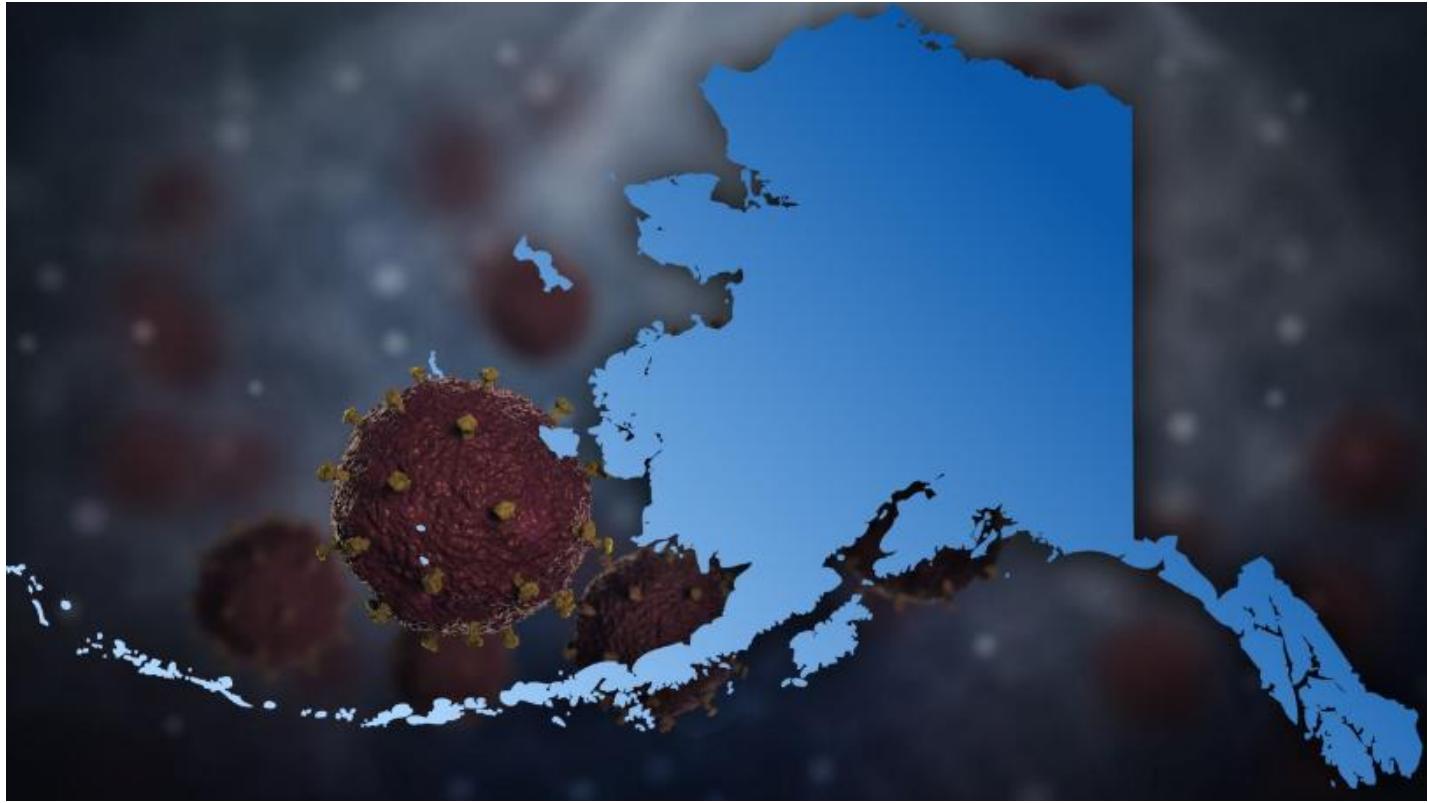


Anchorage Mayor says a different path may be taken as Dunleavy announces Phase 3/4



(KTUU)

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ANCHORAGE, Alaska (KTUU) - Gov. Mike Dunleavy announced Tuesday evening that Alaska will be fully open for business effective at 8 a.m. Friday as the state simultaneously enters phases 3 and 4 of its reopening plan.

Under the third and fourth phases of the plan, all businesses, houses of worship, libraries and museums, and all recreational and sports activities will be open and able to operate at 100 percent capacity.

"We're still asking Alaskans as we have for the past several weeks to work with all of us to try and keep that virus at bay, and avoid any unnecessary contact with others because we know that's how it's spread," Dunleavy said. "We just need folks to be really vigilant and aware that this virus can jump from one person to another if they're closer than six feet, if surfaces aren't wiped down, if you're shaking somebody's hand, etc."

Dunleavy stressed the threat posed by COVID-19 to vulnerable groups like senior citizens and people with underlying health issues, and asked that Alaskans be aware and respectful of the potentially severe impacts on members of those groups.

Under the Phase 3/4 approach, employees are recommended to continue working remotely if possible.

Health mandates 10 on interstate and international travel, 13 on K-12 public and private schools, 14 on non-congregate sheltering order, 15 on elective medical and dental procedures, 17 on commercial fishing, and 18 on intrastate travel will remain in effect, as will Alaska's COVID-19 disaster declaration.

Dunleavy said as the state moves to fully reopen, new cases are expected.

"We will see an increase in cases, but what we'll do is we'll manage the clusters or spikes on an individual basis,"  Dunleavy said, referring to individual geographic or regional management of outbreaks. "I don't foresee us going back to something that's statewide."

During Tuesday's Anchorage Assembly Meeting, Mayor Berkowitz addressed the governor's then anticipated announcement.

"The governor and I have worked very well together on dealing with the pandemic response, and we are going to continue to do so," said Mayor Berkowitz. "Sometimes the way to a common goal is maybe to take different paths. I would say that while the state might be heading in one direction, and we understand the direction they're heading. I'll wait and see what announcements they make and I will make decisions and consultations with the epidemiologist and the public health experts accordingly."

Berkowitz went on to say the Municipality of Anchorage is going to follow the data. Going on to say information he has shows it takes about two weeks between phases to obtain the information needed to make a decision to move forward.

"Our decisions are going to follow the practices that we've had in the past, it's going to follow the data that is available to us and we will act accordingly."

As for large gatherings, the mayor says he "can't foresee large gatherings in the future."

Meanwhile, during the governor's press conference Tuesday Alaska's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Anne Zink encouraged Alaskans to continue taking precautions such as wearing face coverings.

"This is an individual choice for most people on the way that they want to protect their loved ones and those around them, and we are a different culture than many other cultures and people will make those decisions for themselves," Zink said. "While we have COVID, it's one of a series of important tools, and I encourage people to do it while we do have COVID around."

Following the governor's announcement Carolyn Hall, Communications Director for Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz, released the following statement:

"Anchorage makes decisions on whether to advance to the next phase of reopening by evaluating the health metrics identified in the Roadmap to Reopening plan. If these metrics continue to remain steady or show improvement by the end of the week, we anticipate being able to move forward to Phase 3: "Maintenance".

As the Governor's materials directly acknowledged today, local communities are permitted to have stricter health restrictions. Businesses and organizations within the municipality are required to comply with local as well as state law. Phase 3 requirements will be provided in an updated emergency order and criteria for businesses."

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