

Mayor's Pandemic Risk Assessment for March

Covid-19 Recommendations Nationally from CDC.

CDC reports rapidly declining case rates nationally but notes that some local communities may not reflect that trend. CDC now recommends that in most communities with low case rates pandemic protective measures like masking may be relaxed or made optional. The CDC webpage [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov) includes an interactive tool to identify risk and recommendations for any census district in the nation. For the Hoonah/Angoon census district, in which we are included, the posted CDC Risk Level is "Low" (green). The recommendations for our posted risk level are as follows:

- Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines
 - Get tested if you have symptoms
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People may choose to mask at any time. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask.

COVID-19 Case Trends (State of Alaska website)

ALERT LEVELS (March 4, 2022) – The current statewide alert level – based on the reported number of cases per 100,000 people over the past 7 days – is high (red) at 293.2. For boroughs and census areas: 27 areas are at the high alert level (>100 cases), one area is at the substantial alert level (50-99.99), no areas are at the moderate alert level (10-49.99) and no areas are at the low alert level (0-9.99).

Alaskan Covid-19 deaths reported last week: 28. Only two were in Southeast Alaska—all southern SE.

Recorded cases and hospitalizations have dropped off significantly in Alaska in the last month.

Many cases statewide are not reported because home tests are not reported or tallied by the State. Therefore, case rates are underestimates of the actual totals. However, hospitalizations for Covid-19 are well tallied.

Covid-19 Cases in Gustavus.

Gustavus is unfortunately bucking the encouraging trends Nationally and in Statewide. We have had a major outbreak centered among school children and their families. The Gustavus School shut down last week because staff and students were covid-infected and needing to isolate. Many families are using home tests to identify cases and are caring for their patients at home. We are glad they are testing and isolating and hope that everyone who is sick recovers quickly and completely. Because most tests locally are not done by the official city team they are not recorded or included in State or National statistics, and we do not have confirmed tallies. Nevertheless, informal counts by knowledgeable local people who I trust, suggest there may be on the order of 20-25 cases in Gustavus currently. Facebook posts suggest there are now new cases outside the school families, suggesting community spread beyond the school families. We are not aware of any hospitalizations of Gustavus residents, thankfully. But 20 cases in a population of,

say 600 here in winter, means a rate would be over 3300 per 100,000. The State of Alaska sets a High Alert level when a case rate is 100 cases per 100,000. **By such reckoning Gustavus is in a High Alert Level with community spread occurring.**

Mayor's Conclusions for March.

The national and statewide trends for the Covid-19 pandemic are encouraging but caution is still advised. We have been there before. New variants are certain to appear, and some may be much more serious than omicron. Or, they may not—with higher vaccination rates and the unvaccinated population increasingly immune due to past exposure, new vaccines on the horizon, effective treatment modalities available and abundant, we hope to have seen the last big surge in cases, hospitalizations, and deaths.

The current covid-19 outbreak in Gustavus is a setback. Absent that outbreak, and considering trends nationally and statewide, I had hoped to recommend repeal of our mask-wearing for City facilities. Ironically, the outbreak at the school confirmed the wisdom of the City's conservative protective measures—specifically requiring masks in city facilities. The school had a different response model, and the result was an outbreak that spread illness, closed the school, and now has spread into the broader community.

The City facilities should continue to stay open for public business during the present outbreak by applying protective measures including masking indoors, to reduce the probability of illness transmission to staff, volunteers, and others using our facilities. We should reassess the masking requirement for our facilities when the outbreak has ended, and the risk of transmission locally and regionally has dropped to low. It is my intent that we maintain the masking requirement no longer than reasonably necessary.

To these ends, we recommend Gustavus residents maintain awareness of the continuing risk of transmission, be especially considerate of those among us who are of higher risk is serious illness and follow Alaska Department of Health and Human Services recommendations if they are exposed to cases or feel symptomatic. See: [COVID-19 in Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services](#).

We all are thankful for the professional staff at the Gustavus Clinic. We urge anyone with possible covid-19 symptoms to call the clinic at 907-697-3008 for advice and assistance.

The City has expanded its official testing program at the fire hall to 6 days per week, Monday-Friday 9-4, and Saturday from 12-3.