



STATE OF ALASKA

New Public Health Disaster Emergency Summary

Summary:

On November 6, 2020, Governor Mike Dunleavy issued a new 30-day Declaration of Public Health Disaster to manage the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus in Alaska. The disaster declaration goes into effect 12:01 AM on Monday, November 16, 2020 and expires on 11:59 PM on Tuesday, December 15, 2020.

Why is a New Declaration Needed?

Governor Dunleavy first issued a Declaration of Public Health Disaster on March 11, 2020 in the face of an imminent threat of a COVID-19 outbreak.

The Governor then proposed extending his disaster declaration by statute when he introduced Senate Bill 241 on March 22, 2020. Originally, Senate Bill 241 would have extended the disaster declaration until March 12, 2021. Governor Dunleavy proposed this because, as he said in his transmittal letter to the Legislature: "I have proposed a one year extension due to the uncertainty and unknown duration of the global pandemic." The Legislature initially curtailed the extension to September 1, 2020, before finally settling on a deadline of November 15, 2020.

Since the passage of SB 241, the threat of COVID-19 is no longer imminent; it is real with positive cases in Alaska growing exponentially. The Legislature's leadership stated they are unable to secure the necessary support to convene themselves in a Special Legislative Session to extend the current disaster declaration. Absent action, the powers of relief and assistance for healthcare providers, local governments, and businesses are not available.

What Does the Disaster Declaration do for Alaskans?

A disaster declaration gives essential tools to state officials, local governments, and healthcare providers to combat the effects of COVID-19 by enabling the Governor powers to:

- Stand up a unified command through the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Suspend regulations and requirements impeding healthcare delivery during an emergency such as enabling more telehealth, allowing for government services to be provided without in-person visitation requirements, and suspending fees on affected businesses and individual Alaskans
- Allow the state to access federal funding and assistance
- Empowers state health officials to prioritize resources to protect the most vulnerable Alaskans.