



MEDIA RELEASE

San Juan County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 30, 2020

The San Juan County Health & Community Services surveillance and contact tracing team is actively investigating a positive COVID-19 case with ties to San Juan Island.

The case technically belongs to another county due to both the patient's residence and the testing location being on the mainland, however the patient had recently worked in San Juan County. The initial cause of transmission to the patient was due to an off-island exposure.

The County contact tracing team has been aggressively reaching out to anyone who may have had close contact with the patient. At this time, the risk to the broader community appears to be low. The patient was tested at a mainland clinic as soon as symptoms appeared, and the results were received within 12 hours.

This case is a perfect reminder of the need to remain cautious and focused. Though there is reason to think the risk with this case is low, the situation will require ongoing follow up and monitoring by public health surveillance staff to identify and prevent community spread.

As we move into Phase 2 and prepare for Phase 3, we will need to be vigilant. Whether the source be a worker or visitor coming to the island, or an islander headed to the mainland for a visit with family, shopping trip, or work – the need for safety precautions is real. This is why there are strict guidelines for businesses as they open, why the face covering order is in effect, and why those who are at high risk are asked to minimize their exposure as much as possible.

San Juan County Health Officer Dr. Frank James summarizes the situation, "It is too soon to know for sure, but I think there's a good chance we have avoided community transmission on the island from this case. If so, this will be a textbook example of why the precautions we're taking to keep the islands safe matter so much. The fact that the patient was tested quickly by their provider, that their employer was taking full precautions, and that our community and the patient have been covering their faces all matter. If we're going to avoid outbreaks we all need to wear face coverings, social distance, and continue to wash our hands. As we move forward toward opening our economy we have a collective responsibility to do so safely."

If the early assessment of this case changes or if additional positive cases are identified, updates will provide further details as they are available.

Again, this case will not appear on San Juan County's official count- but has certainly triggered a local response and merits increased local awareness. This disease is still a threat to our community.