



Leadership in unprecedented times

As Mayors, in the midst of preparing for and responding to crisis, often the hardest question we ask ourselves is what to tell our residents and employees who may be out of work, families home with kids, and businesses facing a dramatic downturn. There's no easy answer when facing uncertainty and fear. Here's what we know:

- The federal government is ramping up its efforts to respond both to the public health crisis and the corresponding economic challenge facing the nation.
- The State of Alaska has taken all the necessary actions to flatten the curve, which will preserve the integrity of our healthcare infrastructure.
- Transportation and supply linkages will remain intact, and there is no indication that food or fuel shortages will occur
- Working together, across levels of government, we're developing solutions to what comes next in order to support residents, families and businesses.

Uncertainty for local governments is best addressed by working through what's called a continuity of operations plan – essentially, this is an implementable document that describes exactly what we'll do to keep government services functioning, so that residents can depend on the essentials. The same can be helpful for residents:

- Sit down as a family or business and determine what's essential – what are the things that you must have, or must do; and prepare for having that in place as we move forward
- Ask yourselves what resources are necessary – what do you have on hand that can be stretched out or maintained; and identify what else you may need
- Communicate to local and state officials concerns that you have so that together we can help to meet your needs – often there is already a plan in place to assist you.

The State of Alaska is resilient and was built with grit and determination and we have great people in place to make sure this challenge is overcome. We know that community members might not always see or know about the systems we have in place to respond, but we're so glad for the leadership and competency of our public health community and emergency response officials.

We know that one of the biggest challenges is still to come, whether as families work through social distancing, schools remain closed, businesses may be closed, there's a downturn in the economy and there's fundamentally less of that community fabric that you've come to depend on. But we're no less a community. We know that the state and federal governments are looking at:

- Unemployment insurance and increasing paid leave
- Economic stimulus and small business support packages
- Loan and interest deferral, capital infusion and rate decreases

These will be important as Americans struggle with adversity. But local governments have tools at their disposal as well, and we know that many are considering what to use, including:

- Ensuring that utilities remain online, and that residents remain connected

- Economic development strategies support small and local businesses
- Implementing staff support measures, including teleworking options and adequate paid time off
- How best to utilize savings both for short term emergency management and long-term needs caused by a reduction in economic activity
- Accessing State and Federal funds, resources meant to support community members and businesses
- Mechanisms to help with childcare, short term unemployment, food and fuel purchases
- Tax relief, where possible

Residents might see local governments operating differently in the short term, with meetings occurring by phone and with a different frequency as elected officials respond to the circumstances. But there will be plenty of opportunities for public engagement throughout and residents should know we're just a call away. We have dedicated staff who are responsive to local needs and helping us problem-solve as we go. We're here and active.

Yes, these times are uncertain. But we live in a great state with great people, and all levels of government are working to protect the public, in the short term, and respond to need as we move forward. Together, we will weather this storm.