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Trident Seafoods approaches zero COVID spread following outbreak at Akutan facility

Feb. 3, 2021 (Seattle, WA)— Results of Trident’s response to the COVID-19 outbreak at its Akutan, Alaska, processing plant have the company expressing confidence that – with continued diligence – the crisis will soon be behind it.

Of the 554 employees currently in Akutan, 206 have tested positive as of Feb. 2. A total of 307 of the 706 employees originally on-site have tested positive since the company learned on Jan. 17 that SARS-CoV-2 was present. All employees have remained in quarantine. As a precaution, Trident has chartered flights to move employees who are at high risk, including individuals older than 60 and those with underlying health conditions, from its Akutan campus. Those employees are quarantining in Anchorage, where additional medical support is available if it is necessary.

Trident is conducting daily testing of all employees in quarantine using a combination of frequent rapid antigen testing and periodic PCR tests.

“Our daily positive rate has been dropping significantly over the past week, and today’s low rate of around 1 percent indicates that our response protocols have been working,” said Stefanie Moreland, Trident vice president of government relations.

“We greatly appreciate the cooperation of our employees and the exceptional support and guidance from the State of Alaska, City of Akutan, City of Unalaska, Eastern Aleutian Tribes, Iliuliuk Clinic, and other regional medical providers, in helping us mount an effective response,” said Trident CEO Joe Bundrant.

That support has helped Trident accelerate its efforts to eradicate the virus, Moreland said.

“We have bolstered our onsite medical staff and found efficiencies in our testing protocols, which has allowed us to conduct twice-daily wellness checks, mass testing, and rapidly respond to new positive cases,” she said. “Combined, this has allowed us to quickly respond to new cases, minimizing chance of further spread.”

With increased testing and medical capacity, as well as the evacuation of all high-risk employees from the facility, Trident is working on plans for employees who have finished their isolation and quarantine period to return to work. For any employees wishing to leave, Trident is arranging quarantine accommodations, meals, wellness monitoring, and testing necessary under State of Alaska mandates in preparation for safe onward travel.

“We are working on communicating the different scenarios to our employees and greatly appreciate their sacrifice as they help us eliminate the virus from our facility,” Moreland said.

“The health and safety of our employees remains our top concern, and we will not operate in Akutan until we have confidence we’ve achieved our target of zero COVID-19 spread,” Bundrant said. “We are very close, but must remain diligent with our quarantine protocols.”

In the meantime, Trident is making the most of its other processing capacity – including at facilities in St. Paul, Kodiak, and Sand Point, and the M/V Independence – to keep operations moving. This is important to making markets available to fishermen at a key time, and it is essential to continuing to provide food for the nation and around the world.

ABOUT TRIDENT

Trident Seafoods, 100-percent American-owned and privately held, is the largest vertically integrated seafood harvesting and processing company in North America. The company employs more than 8,000 people and serves hundreds of independent harvesters throughout Alaska each year. In addition to its primary processing facilities in ten coastal communities in Alaska, Trident owns and operates three large whitefish catcher-processors and four mobile processing ships. Trident’s “From the Source to the Plate” motto exemplifies its continuing commitment to stay close to the resource, to know its fish and its fishermen, and to maintain the quality and integrity of its products throughout the value chain. Trident serves markets in more than 50 countries with wild Alaska seafood products. It has facilities in the U.S., Japan, Europe, China and Latin America.

Trident’s Akutan shore plant is remote and entirely self-reliant, in proximity to Bering Sea fishing grounds on an island located 750 miles southwest of Anchorage in Alaska’s Aleutian Chain. With more than 1,400 company-housed employees during peak seasons, Akutan sustains a year-round, multi-species frozen seafood operation capable of processing as much as 3 million pounds of raw fish per day. Wild Alaska pollock—the Bering Sea’s most abundant whitefish—is the primary focus of the Akutan operation, and the plant also processes significant volumes of Pacific cod, Alaska king & snow crab, halibut and other important species.