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STATE OF ALASKA



Press Release

JOINT DEPARTMENTAL RELEASE

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Sitka residents sickened; oysters possible cause

More than 25 report symptoms

(Anchorage, AK) — More than 25 people have been identified with acute gastrointestinal illness in Sitka, and four of the patients have tested positive for norovirus infection, which appears to be linked to locally grown oysters. Norovirus infection causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping; most people recover within two to three days without medical treatment.

The Sitka grower has voluntarily stopped selling oysters until sales are approved by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

The Departments of Health and Social Services and Environmental Conservation began a joint investigation in early February after the foodborne illness outbreak was first reported.

The departments are asking people who experienced a new onset of diarrhea or vomiting starting Jan. 30 or later, and within two days of eating Sitka oysters, to report their illness by calling the Section of Epidemiology at 1-877-469-8067.

People with norovirus infection should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration and use good handwashing and other hygienic practices to prevent the spread of illness to others.