

WEATHER IN UTQIAGVIK AND DEADHORSE

We will be in Utqiagvik and Deadhorse near their warmest days of the year (July 27-28), which may still feel cool to some visitors. In Utqiagvik, average daily highs are typically in the mid-to-high 40s °F and lows in the mid-high 30s at this time. Though it hit 57 °F in Utqiagvik in early August last year, the forecast for this year looks more typical. In Deadhorse, average daily highs are usually in the mid-50s °F in the first few days of August and lows in the low 40s °F. Winds average around 10 mph and the chance of rain around 20% each day in both locations. In Utqiagvik, the sun will be above the horizon continuously while we are there (it will set for the first time since Spring on August 2), while in Deadhorse we will have around 23 hours of daylight.¹

Gear List

RECOMMENDED FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

Pack for cool breezy weather with the possibility of rain, wind, and fog, a remote chance of snow, and near certainty of mosquitos. Layers are recommended.

- Rain gear
- Waterproof knee-high boots (for tundra walks)
- Warm, windproof jacket (or jacket + wind layer)
- Warm socks, hat, gloves, neck gaiter
- Mosquito head net, hat or jacket
- Mosquito repellent
- N95 or KN95 face mask
- Toiletries
- Laundry detergent
- Indoor shoes and shower slippers
- Day pack
- Reusable water bottle
- Sleeping bag and pad (emergency gear for village tours only)

¹ More weather data and beautiful graphs at weatherspark.com

VILLAGE TOURS: A SLEEPING BAG IS RECOMMENDED JUST IN CASE

Participants taking part in the Village Field Trips on July 30 should pack a lightweight sleeping bag and pad, in case the return flight to Utqiagvik is delayed. We will look at the weather before the morning departure and make a conservative call about flying.

DALTON HIGHWAY EXCURSION: PACK LIGHT AND USE SOFT-SIDED LUGGAGE

Those attending the Utqiagvik conference and continuing on for the Dalton Highway Excursion should pack on the light side. Wright Air limits passengers to 40 lbs. each on our flight to Deadhorse. Because there is limited luggage storage room on the motor coach, soft-sided luggage is preferred, since it takes up less room.

Connectivity

CELL SERVICE AND INTERNET IN UTQIAGVIK

The cutting of the undersea fiber optic cable earlier this summer continues to make communications more challenging than usual on the North Slope, including in Utqiagvik and Wainwright.² (Deadhorse and Point Lay are unaffected by the outage.) In Utqiagvik, WiFi is available at UIC Science lodging facilities and the BARC classroom, but expect speeds to be slower than you are used to. Download video or large data files prior to your arrival.

Cell service in Utqiagvik and Wainwright with any carrier other than GCI is spotty. Voice calls and texting, in addition to data services, may only be possible when in range of WiFi. Using the WiFi Assist setting on your phone can help, or you can use Facetime or What's App for WiFi calling from your non-GCI phone.

If better connectivity is critical for you while in Utqiagvik, UIC Science recommends purchasing a prepaid GCI phone or SIM card prior to traveling or once you arrive. A GCI flip phone costs \$49.99, and you can get a one-month prepaid plan for \$25 for Alaska Unlimited or \$40 for 3GB Nationwide. (With certain phones, you can have two SIM cards (an eSIM and a physical SIM), allowing you to use a prepaid GCI SIM card along with an eSIM from your regular provider, instead of purchasing a second phone. For more information and instructions on dual SIM, contact your carrier.³)

² <https://alaskapublic.org/2023/06/12/cut-cable-causes-weeks-long-north-slope-northwest-alaska-internet-and-cellphone-outages/>

³ Verizon: <https://www.verizon.com/support/dual-sim-with-esim-faqs>
AT&T: <https://www.att.com/support/article/wireless/KM1288682>
T-Mobile: <https://www.t-mobile.com/support/devices/sim-esim>

COMMUNICATIONS ON THE DALTON HIGHWAY

Internet data and cell service are unaffected by the cable cut in Deadhorse and you should be able to access WiFi at the Arctic Oilfield Hotel. You can expect most cell phones to work in and around Deadhorse (AT&T and GCI work well). However, there is no cell service along much of the Dalton Highway away from pump stations. Connectivity in Fairbanks should not be an issue.

CASH AND CREDIT

Credit card machines and ATMS are working again in Utqiagvik, but you may want to bring extra cash just in case. Bringing some cash is also recommended if you might want to buy something from local artisans. Along the Dalton Highway, you should not have any trouble using credit cards (if you want to buy snacks or souvenirs in Deadhorse or Coldfoot, for example). There is an ATM available in Deadhorse, but not Coldfoot.

Wildlife Safety

BEARS

Most polar bear sightings are at Point Barrow and not many travel into town. If a bear is in town the North Slope Borough wildlife department will spot it and respond. (A bear guard is strongly recommended if traveling to the Point in Utqiagvik.) No bear guard is necessary in town in Point Lay or Wainwright.

Brown bears can be a risk in Deadhorse and the Prudhoe Bay oilfield. We will check in with oilfield security, which monitors the location of bears in the Deadhorse area. Bear spray cannot be brought on commercial flights. We will have a small number of cannisters with us for the group to share in Deadhorse. During the tour we will stay in a group on the tundra and maintain situational awareness

FOXES

Foxes can also be a risk anywhere on the North Slope. They will usually stay out of your way unless they are rabid. When walking on the tundra or in town, be alert for foxes acting strangely (e.g. walking in circles or approaching you without fear) or looking confused or foaming at the mouth. If you do see a fox that may be rabid, slowly back away and get into a building or vehicle.

COVID Risk and Precautions

While there are no longer COVID-19 restrictions in place, we encourage participants to come prepared to protect themselves and others by following recommended precautions during your pre-Symposium travel and the days we are together. We know that SARS-CoV-2 virus can lead to short- and long-term health risks affecting nearly every organ system in the body.

Reinfection is possible in as little as six months after a previous infection or booster, and each infection increases the risk of post-viral complications.

The July 8 weekly [COVID & Flu Update for Alaska](#)⁴ from the Alaska Department of Health says, *COVID-19 transmission continues to occur in many communities across Alaska. Most COVID-19 in Alaska at this time is caused by viruses belonging to either the XBB.1.5 lineage or to BQ lineages.* While still relatively low, COVID case numbers appear to be on rising in Alaska, and this is supported by anecdotal knowledge of an increasing number of cases among community members and visiting tourists this summer. Caution while traveling is warranted. Please help us keep each other safe.

Regardless of case numbers, we will take the following precautions:

- UIC Science has added HVAC ventilation and installed HEPA filters in their lodging and meeting rooms. Lodging for most participants is in single-occupancy rooms.
- We will monitor CO₂ levels in group settings during the event and increase ventilation as needed, to the extent possible.
- The Symposium will provide a supply of high-quality N95 and/or KN95 masks for participants to use.
- We will also have a small supply of rapid antigen tests on hand and encourage anyone experiencing symptoms or with known exposure to use them.
- UIC Science has separate lodging facilities where participants can isolate if they test positive and where support (food delivery, health check ins) will be available.
- If a participant tests positive on the Dalton Highway Excursion, they can isolate in lodging in Deadhorse or Coldfoot while we help them arrange transportation home. CDC Guidelines recommend isolating for 5 days and only traveling if masked.

We ask all participants to help us reduce the risk of COVID spreading during the Symposium by taking the following precautions:

- Test before departing for the Symposium if experiencing any symptoms of illness, if you've been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID, or if case numbers are high in your home community. *While rapid tests are not great at detecting infection, they have performed well as a way to identify contagiousness. Therefore, a negative test result means you are at low risk for spreading the virus to others.*⁵
- Wear an N95 or KN95 mask during your travel to the Symposium, especially on flights and in crowded or poorly ventilated spaces. This helps protect yourself as well as other Symposium participants who may be more vulnerable, and reduces the risk that you will have to leave the Symposium early.
- Test during the Symposium if you experience any symptoms of illness (even if you don't think it's COVID) or if you learn you have been exposed to it. Test again after 48 hours if

⁴ <https://health.alaska.gov/dph/epi/id/pages/covid-19/covidandflu.aspx>. You can also monitor cases and hospitalizations statewide and by borough on Alaska's [COVID-19 Data Hub](#)⁴.

⁵ <https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/if-youve-been-exposed-to-the-coronavirus>

the test is negative. *Even if you are asymptomatic, let organizers know that you may be contagious so mitigation can be discussed while you wait for test results. We can let others know that additional precautions are advised without disclosing anyone's name.*

- Testing is available on a walk-in basis at the Emergency Room at Samuel Simmons Hospital in Utqiagvik. They have both PCR and Rapid Antigen Tests available.
- Do not attend the Symposium if you test positive before or during the Symposium. Most sessions will be recorded on Zoom and we will arrange for remote participation if anyone cannot attend in person due to illness.

Even if you are personally less concerned about COVID at this time, remember that others may be. We asked participants about their level of concern when they registered for the Symposium:

- 36% were not concerned
- 44% were a little concerned
- 20% were somewhat or very concerned

We encourage participants to layer in additional protections in accordance with their own risk tolerance, and we ask everyone to respect the right of others to mask or take other precautions without comment or reproval.

Here are some ways individuals can reduce their own risk:

- Wear a well-fitting N95 or KN95 mask indoors, especially in poorly ventilated spaces.
- Use an over-the-counter antiviral nasal spray, such as Covixyl or Enovid, to prevent infection especially when masking is not possible. Covixyl is available from Amazon for under \$20.^{6,7}
- Use a saline nasal rinse twice a day and use a CPC mouthwash if you have been exposed to COVID to reduce viral load and the severity and duration of symptoms.⁸
- If eligible, take the prescription antiviral Paxlovid within five days of symptom onset to reduce the risk of severe disease and hospitalization.⁹
- Use a portable CO₂ monitor to identify areas with inadequate ventilation.¹⁰
- Be vaccinated and get a booster if one is available.

⁶ <https://www.clinicaltrialsarena.com/features/covid-19-nasal-sprays-virus>

⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9969373>

⁸ <https://www.comhs.org/about-us/newsroom/health-library/2022/09/14/got-covid-flushing-out-nasal-passages-could-cut-severity>

⁹ <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/13-things-to-know-paxlovid-covid-19>

¹⁰ <https://www.hse.gov.uk/ventilation/using-co2-monitors.htm>