

# Safer Rural Alaska Waste Disposal Practices For Covid-19 and Always!

Garbage contains disease-causing organisms and can attract animals and insects that carry disease. Some waste contains toxics that can contaminate subsistence. So regular and proper waste disposal is required for family and community health. Thankfully, we can manage waste without spreading Covid-19.

## First, Let's review the basics of how Covid-19 spreads!



An infected person carries the virus in their breath and in the wet linings of their throat, eyes and nose. By covering their cough and sneeze, they prevent the most dangerous way to spread the virus. But what they used to cover their cough or sneeze is now infected – and can infect others. Things like hands, gloves, Kleenex, or clothes can touch other things, like doorknobs, cell phones, and light switches. If they don't cover their face, then the virus can spray up to 6 feet away or more – potentially contaminating anything it lands on.



**Good News!** What happens if you accidentally touch the “droplets” from an ill person’s cough or sneeze? If you don’t touch your face before you sanitize your hands properly -- **Nothing 😊**. Remember though – *if you don’t sanitize or wash your hands, you can still infect others*, simply by touching something they will touch.

**A note for all community members:** You may be infected and not know it. Elders are most at risk if they get sick. *Always wipe shared surfaces after you use them.* Distance yourself from others not in your household, and discard your trash only in appropriate locations and ways.



**Not sure if a you or a family member is infected?** Contact your clinic or hospital and describe the symptoms. Not sure who to call? Phone 211. They will tell you what steps next so that your family stays safe. If 211 doesn't work in your community, call: **1-800-478-2221**

## So, what are 3 key steps to take when handling waste?



**Wash/Sanitize!** Wash or sanitize your hands before you touch your face *and* before you touch others, or what others might touch – what we call a “shared surface” here. Sanitize shared surfaces often – as well as *every* time someone uses them that did not sanitize their hands properly. Use disinfection wipes or bleach solution. **Careful!** See our [General Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting High-Touch Surfaces](#) for how to make wipes and wash hands safely.

**Keep 6-feet away!** Breathing someone’s cough or sneeze *IS* enough to get infected. Breathing air next to an infected person *might* be enough to get infected. This is especially true if you are indoors or right next to that person for an extended time. It is hard to keep 6 feet away from our families and those we care for. But it is simple to stay 6 feet from people when discarding and collecting trash. Imagine standing on the other end of a couch, **moose**, or snowmachine!



**Change certain waste disposal practices!** Experts even think if you breathe air, especially indoors, where an infected person just *was* – it *might* be enough to get infected. You can't always know where an infected person was. But you can stop the ‘air-spread’ of the virus by:



- ♦ **One at a time:** When standing, walking, or driving, folks from different households should spread apart and wait turns at waste disposal & recycling sheds, shared bins, salvage areas, and landfill.
- ♦ **Limit shared space:** Don't use the same indoor space immediately after each other.