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Press Release

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State, UAF celebrate opening of new virology lab

New lab already busy with novel H1N1 testing

(Fairbanks, AK) — Lt. Governor Sean Parnell, along with officials from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services and the University of Alaska Fairbanks, officially cut the ribbon today marking the ceremonial opening of the state's new virology laboratory.

The \$32 million facility, which is located on the UAF campus, was completed within budget and approximately a year ahead of schedule. Since becoming fully functional in January 2009, the lab has been the center for testing flu samples connected with the recent H1N1 outbreak. The lab processed more than 600 flu samples in May.

“When it comes to the scientists who perform 50,000 tests a year to diagnose and prevent diseases such as the swine flu, hepatitis, rubella, influenza, rabies and the threat of small pox spreading throughout the state, I'm truly happy to have them working in a quality facility with excellent and reliable equipment,” said Lt. Governor Parnell, who spoke at the ceremony.

The virology laboratory is a joint effort of the Department of Health and Social Services and the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The Department of Health and Social Services will occupy the ground and upper levels while UAF will occupy the basement level.

The new 29,000-square-foot building replaces the old facility on the West Ridge of the UAF campus and expands the laboratory's operations to include more space for the safe and proper isolation of potential biological hazards. The additional space also provides surge capacity for critical public health laboratory work that could overwhelm a single Anchorage laboratory.

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