

Alaska Flooding and Ice Jams– FEMA-1843-DR

Declared June 11, 2009

On May 25, 2009, Governor Sarah Palin requested a major disaster declaration as a result of flooding due to snow melt and destructive river ice jams, caused by rapid spring warming combined with excessive snow pack and river ice thickness during the period of April 28 to May 31, 2009. The Governor requested a declaration for Individual Assistance and Public Assistance for 13 jurisdictions and Hazard Mitigation statewide. During the period of May 23-29, 2009, joint Federal, State, and local Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) were conducted in the requested counties and are summarized below. PDAs estimate damages immediately after an event and are considered, along with several other factors, in determining whether a disaster is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and the affected local governments, and that Federal assistance is necessary.¹

On June 11, 2009, President Obama declared that a major disaster exists in the State of Alaska. This declaration made Individual Assistance requested by the Governor available to affected individuals and households in the Alaska Gateway Regional Educational Attendance Area (REAA), the Kuspuk REAA, the Yukon Flats REAA, and the Yukon-Koyukuk REAA. This declaration also made Public Assistance requested by the Governor available to State and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by the flooding and ice jams in the Alaska Gateway REAA, the Kuspuk REAA, the Lower Kuskokwin REAA, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the Yukon Flats REAA, and the Yupiit REAA. Finally, this declaration made Hazard Mitigation Grant Program assistance requested by the Governor available for hazard mitigation measures statewide.²

Summary of Damage Assessment Information Used in Determining Whether to Declare a Major Disaster

Individual Assistance -

- Total Number of Residences Impacted:³ 236
 - Destroyed - 25
 - Major Damage - 47
 - Minor Damage - 28
 - Affected - 136

- Percentage of insured residences:⁴ (0%)
- Percentage of low-income households:⁵ (83%)
- Percentage of elderly households:⁶ -
- Total Individual Assistance cost estimate: \$2,193,540

Public Assistance -

- Primary Impact: Damage to buildings and equipment
- Total Public Assistance cost estimate: \$7,148,150

- Statewide per capita impact:⁷ \$11.40
- Statewide per capita impact indicator:⁸ \$1.31
- Countywide per capita impact:
 - Alaska Gateway REAA (\$1,975.06)
 - Kuspuk REAA (\$276.08)
 - Lower Kuskokwim REAA (\$5.34)
 - Matanuska-Susitna Borough (\$6.74)
 - Yukon Flats REAA (\$83.70)
 - Yupiit REAA (\$11.35)
- Countywide per capita impact indicator:⁹ \$3.28

¹ The preliminary damage assessment (PDA) process is a mechanism used to determine the impact and magnitude of damage and resulting needs of individuals, businesses, public sector, and community as a whole. Information collected is used by the State as a basis for the Governor's request for a major disaster or emergency declaration, and by the President in determining a response to the Governor's request (44 CFR § 206.33).

² When a Governor's request for major disaster assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended (Stafford Act) is under review, a number of primary factors are considered to determine whether assistance is warranted. These factors are outlined in FEMA's regulations (44 CFR § 206.48). The President has ultimate discretion and decision making authority to declare major disasters and emergencies under the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. § 5170 and § 5191).

³ Degree of damage to impacted residences:

- Destroyed – total loss of structure, structure is not economically feasible to repair, or complete failure to major structural components (e.g., collapse of basement walls/foundation, walls or roof);
- Major Damage – substantial failure to structural elements of residence (e.g., walls, floors, foundation), or damage that will take more than 30 days to repair;
- Minor Damage – home is damaged and uninhabitable, but may be made habitable in short period of time with repairs; and
- Affected – some damage to the structure and contents, but still habitable.

⁴ By law, Federal disaster assistance cannot duplicate insurance coverage (44 CFR § 206.48(b)(5)).

⁵ Special populations, such as low-income, the elderly, or the unemployed may indicate a greater need for assistance (44 CFR § 206.48(b)(3)).

⁶ Ibid (44 CFR § 206.48(b)(3)).

⁷ Based on State population in the 2000 Census.

⁸ Statewide Per Capita Impact Indicator for FY09, *Federal Register*, October 1, 2008.

⁹ Countywide Per Capita Impact Indicator for FY09, *Federal Register*, October 1, 2008.