



Governor Mike Dunleavy STATE OF ALASKA

April 1, 2022

The Honorable Peter Micciche
Senate President
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 111
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

The Honorable Louise Stutes
Speaker of the House
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 208
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

President Micciche and Speaker Stutes:

On March 28, 2022, I declared a State Disaster for the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) for their response to a large avalanche between Mileposts 7.0 and 7.9 of Hiland Road in Eagle River, Alaska, that blocked access and disrupted power to approximately 145 homes. The State Declaration authorizes funding for State's public assistance program as well as necessary administrative and disaster management expenses.

On the morning of March 25, 2022, the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) was notified by the MOA Office of Emergency Management (OEM) that a large avalanche had occurred within a residential area of Eagle River off Hiland Road. The avalanche was first reported at approximately 11:30 pm the previous evening when the Matanuska Electric Association (MEA) noticed that approximately 145 customers were without power. The avalanche initially measured between 60 and 80 feet deep (revised later to 120 feet deep) and 300 to 400 feet wide. Approximately 120 homes were located above the slide with six within the direct slide area.

The MOA OEM, Anchorage Police Department (APD), Anchorage Fire Department (AFD), and other municipal entities have responded to the avalanche. The MOA activated their emergency operations center (EOC) and an interagency incident management team (IMT) was set up at AFD Station 13 off Hiland Road. Additional support was provided by the SEOC, Department of Public Safety (DPS), Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), Mat-Su Search and Rescue, and Alaska Mountain Rescue Group (AMRG). MEA crews were able to install a temporary power line and restore power to most affected residents by end of the day.

On March 26, 2022 the MOA forwarded to the SEOC a local declaration of disaster emergency with request for state assistance for their response to the avalanche. In their declaration, the MOA mayor requested I declare a State condition of disaster emergency and make available State resources, including fire protection, law enforcement and DOT&PF assets to help mitigate the large, unstable snowpack above the slide area so that emergency crew could resume clearing the road.

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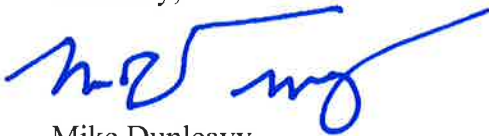
Because the stability of the slide was not fully known, and a substantial amount of hanging snow, known as “hangfire,” was observed on the mountaintop above the avalanche impact area that posed a safety risk to responders, work crews, and any residents that remained in the slide area, avalanche mitigation was considered necessary. Initial estimates reveal the avalanche only released half of the available snow, and the remaining snow could release at any time, plus, the weather forecast included continued poor weather, heavy wet snowfall, and high winds that could prompt additional slides.

On March 27, 2022, after securing a waiver and indemnity agreement whereby MOA agreed to indemnify, hold harmless, and defend the State of Alaska, DOT&PF, Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC), and their agents from any and all claims or actions for injuries, death or damages from the assessment of avalanche risk and/or avalanche mitigation, the operation was successfully accomplished. Ten explosive charges were delivered by helicopter and detonated on the mountainside. This work produced two small slides that effectively diminished the risk of further slides. By the end of the day, MOA had canceled their evacuation order allowing residents to return to their homes. MOA work crews also began road clearing operations on Hiland Road as well.

The Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM) will continue to work with the MOA and involved agencies to determine community response and recovery needs. When a better understanding of the total disaster costs is available, a revised finance plan will be provided.

The total estimated disaster-related permanent response and recovery costs for this disaster have not yet been quantified. Thus, I am limiting expenditures to \$1 million from the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) pursuant to Alaska Statute (AS) 26.23.020(i) and (k), and per AS 26.23.025(a) this letter serves as the initial finance plan. The current balance of the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) is \$4,169,913 and a supplemental appropriation is not required at this time.

Sincerely,



Mike Dunleavy
Governor

Enclosures: Declaration of Disaster Emergency

cc: The Honorable Click Bishop, Finance Committee Co-Chair, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Bert Stedman, Finance Committee Co-Chair, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Neal Foster, Finance Committee Co-Chair, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Kelly Merrick, Finance Committee Co-Chair, Alaska State House of Representatives

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The Honorable Shelly Hughes, District F, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Lora Reinbold, District G, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Bill Wielechowski, District H, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Elvi Gray-Jackson, District I, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Tom Begich, District J, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Mia Costello, District K, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Natasha von Imhof, District L, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Josh Revak, District M, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Roger Holland, District N, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Gary Stevens, District P, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Cathy Tilton, District 12, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Ken McCarty, District 13, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable David Nelson, District 15, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Ivy Spohnholz, District 16, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Andy Josephson, District 17, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Harriet Drummond, District 18, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Geran Tarr, District 19, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Zack Fields, District 20, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Matt Claman, District 21, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Sara Rasmussen, District 22, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Chris Tuck, District 23, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Tom McKay, District 24, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Calvin Schrage, District 25, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Laddie Shaw, District 26, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Liz Snyder, District 27, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable James Kaufman, District 28, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Benjamin Carpenter, District 29, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Ronal Gillham, District 30, Alaska State House of Representatives
The Honorable Sarah Vance, District 31, Alaska State House of Representatives
Neil Steinger, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Akis Gialopsos, Legislative Director, Office of the Governor

STATE OF ALASKA
DECLARATION OF DISASTER EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, on the evening of March 24, 2022, a large avalanche measuring between 300 to 400 feet wide and up to 120 feet deep between Mileposts 7.0 and 7.9 of Hiland Road in Eagle River, within the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), blocked access and disrupted power to approximately 145 homes; and,

WHEREAS, the avalanche, considered a once-in-100-year event, released approximately half of the available snowpack on the mountain, resulting in an unstable situation likely to produce additional avalanches if left unmitigated and allowed to happen naturally; and,

WHEREAS, emergency avalanche mitigation measures were considered prudent to address the significant public safety risk to road-clearing crews, occupied homes, private property, and utility and community infrastructure, from potential additional slides; and,

WHEREAS, the MOA, a political subdivision of the State of Alaska, declared a local disaster emergency on March 26, 2022, requesting state assistance to respond to and recover from this event; and

WHEREAS, the following conditions exist as a result of this disaster: mandatory evacuation of multiple homes within the avalanche area; activation and staffing of the MOA Emergency Operations Center (EOC), an interagency Incident Management Team (IMT), and additional responders, public safety, public works, and other resources to manage the response; avalanche mitigation by way of aerial delivery of explosive charges onto the unstable snowpack remaining on the mountainside; set up and staffing of a shelter for displaced persons, and other emergency protective measures; and,

WHEREAS, the MOA may require technical assistance, professional inspection, immediate and/or temporary repairs to restore normal function of Hiland Road, as well as permanent repairs to restore damaged public infrastructure to pre-disaster condition; and,

WHEREAS, the severity and magnitude of the emergency are beyond the timely and effective response and recovery capability of local resources, and there are insufficient regularly appropriated local funds to cover these requirements.

THEREFORE, on this 28th day of March 2022, under authority granted by Alaska Statute 26.23.020(c), I hereby declare that a condition of disaster emergency exists in the Municipality of Anchorage, and this condition is of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant a disaster declaration in order to provide assistance.

FURTHER, the Commissioner of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) is hereby authorized to utilize funds made available for these purposes which are considered necessary for disaster assistance to include disaster public assistance, and necessary administrative and disaster management expenses. State funds are proposed to be spent under AS 26.23.020(i) and (k) and AS 26.23.050. The Commissioner of the DMVA or his designee is the designated State Coordinator; and, is further authorized to task, as necessary, state departments and agencies in accordance with the State Emergency Operations Plan; and is further authorized to exercise, as necessary, the provisions provided under Alaska Statutes 26.23.020(g)(1), (2), (3), and (7).

By:



Mike Dunleavy
Governor