

Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe

Commissioner & Adjutant General

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*Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs*

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

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Alaska National Guardsmen, State Defense Force deploy to Bethel, Circle to assist with flood recovery

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Nine members of the Alaska Organized Militia deployed to Bethel and Circle May 22 and 23 respectively to support flood recovery efforts in Western and Interior Alaska.

The task force, which includes members of the Alaska Air and Army National Guard and the Alaska State Defense Force, will be prepared to conduct debris removal and other flood-recovery operations at the direction of the Alaska State Emergency Operations Center who have incident commanders at both locations.

Four Alaska Air National Guardsmen and an ASDF member staged at Eielson Air Force Base before deploying to Circle in a government vehicle. Two service members – one from the Air Guard and one from the Army Guard – staged from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson before flying to Bethel. They teamed up with two ASDF members from Bethel and Kwethluk respectively. The Bethel team will further deploy to Crooked Creek via fixed-wing aircraft.

The Bethel Armory is on standby, ready to provide emergency shelter for any flood-related evacuees from the region.

The commissioner of the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and adjutant general for the Alaska National Guard, Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe, put the Alaska Organized Militia on notice to be ready to support affected communities after Gov. Mike Dunleavy's emergency declaration May 15.

Saxe officially activated AKOM members May 20 after the communities of Circle and Crooked Creek formally requested recovery support from the SEOC.

“Our fellow Alaskans in the West and the Interior have been tremendously affected by this season’s flooding, and our teams are prepared to assist any way they can through the challenging recovery process,” said Saxe. “Alaskans helping Alaskans. This is our most important mission.”

River flooding in both regions stemmed from unseasonably late snowfall and cold temperatures followed by a rapid rise in temperatures. Melting water froze at night and melted during the day, causing ice dams to overflow riverbanks.

During state emergencies or natural disasters, the SEOC receives requests for assistance from affected communities and assigns the most appropriate state resources to provide assistance.

Federal and state agencies in partnership with humanitarian assistance organizations have been actively engaged in immediate response and continue to work to restore electricity, communications and open roadways and airfields. As of May 23, there have been no reports of injuries or deaths related to the flooding.

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PHOTOS

1. **Web link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos.

<https://ak.ng.mil/Media/News-Article-View/Article/3404802/alaska-national-guardsmen-state-defense-force-deploy-to-bethel-circle-to-assist/>

2. **DVIDS link** includes story and full-resolution photos. (Accessible from military computers.)

<https://www.dvidshub.net/feature/Spring23Flooding>

3. **Flickr link** includes full-resolution photos.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/albums/72177720308476552>



Senior Airman Sean Lake, 168th Wing, Alaska Air National Guard, loads gear at Eielson Air Force Base in preparation to help with debris-clearing operations in Circle, Alaska, May 23, 2023. Four Guardsmen and one member of the Alaska State Defense Force will assist with cleanup and flood recovery efforts at the request of the Alaska State Emergency Operations Center. (Alaska Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Julie Avey)



From the front, Senior Airman Jakob Stokes, Senior Airman Sean Lake, and Tech Sgt. Vincent McKiernan, 168th Wing, Alaska Air National Guard, carry meals, ready to eat to a government vehicle in preparation to travel to Circle, Alaska, May 23, 2023, to support flood-recovery operations. Four Guardsmen and one member of the Alaska State Defense Force will assist with cleanup and flood recovery efforts at the request of the Alaska State Emergency Operations Center. (Alaska Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Julie Avey)

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Senior Airman Jakob Stokes, 168th Wing, Alaska Air National Guard, prepares his gear at Eielson Air Force Base to help with flood-recovery efforts in Circle, Alaska, May 23, 2023. Four Guardsmen and one member of the Alaska State Defense Force will assist with cleanup and flood recovery efforts at the request of the Alaska State Emergency Operations Center. (Alaska Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Julie Avey)



Senior Airman Sean Lake, 168th Wing, Alaska Air National Guard, loads shovels in preparation to help with debris clearing in Circle, Alaska, May 23, 2023. Four Guardsmen and one member of the Alaska State Defense Force will assist with cleanup and flood recovery efforts at the request of the Alaska State Emergency Operations Center. (Alaska Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Julie Avey)