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Governor Dunleavy issues disaster declaration for Andersons sewer and waste water issues

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Governor Mike Dunleavy issued a disaster declaration today to assist the City of Anderson, within the Denali Borough, with their response to ongoing water and sewer issues. The declaration activates the state's Public Assistance program that is designed to fund emergency response costs and help communities rebuild infrastructure damaged by a declared disaster event.

On February 2, 2023, the State Emergency Operations Center was contacted by the city of Anderson regarding a failure of the town's sewer system that began on January 13. Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Village Safe Water personnel are on-site evaluating the problem.

The community's sewage lagoon is overfilled due to higher than normal groundwater, this influx has also infiltrated breaks in the sewage line. The City's pump stations have been overwhelmed and multiple sewer and wastewater lines are frozen. Efforts to thaw lines have been slower than expected. Equipment breakdown and cold temperatures have exacerbated the problems.

On Feb. 6, the City of Anderson and the Denali Borough issued a local disaster declaration, due to groundwater infiltration into the city's wastewater system. The declaration requested technical assistance and funding to return the systems to normal operations.

"The City of Anderson and DEC have been working tirelessly to address the groundwater issues and the effects on their sewer system. They have brought in additional thawing equipment and have hired additional personnel, but this has not been enough and they need more help," said Director Bryan Fisher, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. "For a small community the financial impacts of ongoing emergency response efforts can have long-term negative effects. This disaster declaration can reimburse the community for their current expenses and fund repairs to the community's critical infrastructure."

After the local disaster declarations were signed, the groundwater levels impacting the system dropped approximately 12 feet, allowing the City and DEC Village Safe Water to begin thawing frozen portions of the system and assessing for any potential damages.

The State Emergency Operations Center continues to work with the City of Anderson, Denali Borough, Department of Environmental Conservation, Village Safe Water, and other agencies to support the community's response and recovery efforts.

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