



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Statewide exercise prepares Alaska for big winter storm
Alaska Shield 2012 unites Alaska's emergency team for joint exercise

CAMP DENALI, Alaska – The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management, local communities, utility providers, voluntary agencies and others will conduct a statewide joint exercise Feb. 6-12. Alaska's harsh winter weather, long and tenuous supply lines, and small remote communities present unique challenges not experienced anywhere else in the United States. The exercise will test Alaska's ability to respond to an extreme cold weather emergency.

Alaska Shield 2012 scenario begins with a powerful winter storm that cuts power to large population centers and remote communities throughout Alaska. This creates a need for mass sheltering, medical surge, Emergency Operation Center management, restoration of lifelines, communications, and emergency public information and warning. In addition, other facets of emergency management will be practiced. Seven local jurisdictions, four state agencies, four federal agencies, two military branches, six participants from private industry, and three non-profit or volunteer organizations will work together during the week-long event.

"Our state, communities and partner agencies have established emergency plans and policies that guide our actions during an emergency. Statewide exercises like Alaska Shield allow us to evaluate what works, what needs to be improved, and perhaps discover innovative new ways to respond to emergencies," said John Madden, director of the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

Alaska Shield 2012 planning began more than a year ago, before significant Alaska winter weather in 2011 and 2012.

The 2011 West Coast Storm, declared a state and federal disaster, impacted hundreds of miles of coast line in Western Alaska. The massive storm disrupted power in numerous communities, made air travel extremely dangerous and prompted local emergency managers in multiple communities to establish emergency shelters.

The 2011 Kenai Peninsula Wind Storm, declared a state disaster by Governor Sean Parnell, disrupted power transmission to more than 15,000 homes on the Kenai Peninsula. Public

information warnings, emergency efforts to assist utilities and sheltering operations were undertaken during the event.

The lessons learned from these real-world storms have been incorporated into Alaska Shield 2012 response actions and will be evaluated during the statewide exercise.

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Media: The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs will provide an opportunity to tour the State Emergency Operations Center and interview lead participants in the exercise Feb. 9-10. Please contact Maj. Guy Hayes at 428-6030 for more information.

If you're interested in covering events, please contact the following public information officers in participating communities:

Anchorage	Dawn Brantley	907-343-1407	BrantleyD@ci.anchorage.ak.us
Fairbanks	Sallie Stuvek	907-459-1207	sstuvek@co.fairbanks.ak.us
Juneau	Larurie Sica	907-586-0216	Laurie_Sica@ci.juneau.ak.us
Kenai	Julie Cisco	907-714-2351	jcisco@borough.kenai.ak.us
Kodiak	Debra Marlar	907-486-8636	dmarlar@city.kodiak.ak.us
Mat-Su Borough	Patty Sullivan	907-745-9577	psullivan@matsugov.us
Unalaska	Elizabeth Masone	907-581-1251	cityclerk@ci.unalaska.ak.us
DMVA	Maj. Guy Hayes	907-428-6030	guy.hayes@alaska.gov