

Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe
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and Veterans Affairs**

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PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Jeremy Zidek (907) 441-2337

DHS&EM Working with Unalakleet to Restore Water Service

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska – The City of Unalakleet issued a local disaster declaration on Feb. 26, after a combination of wind and extreme cold weather resulted in power outages, and damage to the community’s water distribution system. Currently, the community has sources of drinking water and is taking water conservation measures.

The Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM) has been in communication with Unalakleet’s mayor and city manager. Unalakleet’s water supply relies on a four-mile-long distribution line from the Powers Creek source to the city’s one million gallon water storage tank. Frozen distribution lines and limited water availability have diminished resident’s water service. Continued efforts to thaw the frozen lines and fix breaks in distribution lines have been taking place.

In addition, DHS&EM is working with the Norton Sound Health Corporation and the Department of Environmental Conservation’s (DEC) Remote Maintenance Worker Program, which addresses water issues in rural Alaska. The multiagency group will continue work with the community to assess the condition of the community’s water system and restore normal water service. The State Emergency Operation Center stands ready to address emergency needs if they arise.

The community arranged delivery from a water supply at an elder care facility in Unalakleet for those without access to potable water or have the means to transport water. In addition, residents are utilizing private wells in the community as a source of potable water.

“The City of Unalakleet’s water system is old and has needed to be upgraded for many years,” said DHS&EM Director Paul Nelson. “While replacing old infrastructure is not eligible under the state’s Public Assistance program, we can and will address critical life, health and safety needs like access to potable water. We can take action with or without a disaster declaration.”

DEC issued a boil water notice for water from the City of Unalakleet’s water system due to multiple freeze-ups and line breaks in the distribution system.

The community is seeking funding to establish a process to utilize new wells in the community that are not yet connected to the existing water system.

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