

Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe
The Adjutant General

www.dmva.alaska.gov
www.ak.ng.mil



*Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs*

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 11, 2025

Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management

Media Contact: State Emergency Operation Center Public Information News Desk 907-428-7142, Jeremy.Zidek@Alaska.gov



Yukon-Kuskokwim Emergency Operations Staff, represented by Association of Village Council Presidents, Tlingit & Haida, Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, FEMA, Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Prevention, Alaska Organized Militia and Team Rubicon.

AVCP and T&H partnership

BY JEREMY ZIDEK AND JOHN ANDREWS, ALASKA DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Partnerships are key. That is the lesson in the response to ex-Typhoon Halong also known at the 2025 West Coast Storm. With the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) activated at its highest level during one of the largest natural disaster responses in

Alaska history, the need for communication and working together was at an all-time high.

Immediately following the storm, the U.S. Coast Guard and Alaska National Guard rescued 51 people from Kipnuk and Kwigillingok. With the help of the Alaska National Guard, over 650 impacted individuals were evacuated to Anchorage in the largest airlift of survivors in the state's history; additional displaced families and individuals have since continued to make their way to Bethel, Anchorage, and other communities. Once in Anchorage, these survivors received meals, sheltering and assistance with other needs, as the work continued in their home region.

AVCP also manages the Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) program, which delivers crucial local law enforcement services across the vast, Yukon-Kuskokwim region—an area with virtually no local police departments and only a handful of Alaska State Troopers covering tens of thousands of square miles. In the storm's immediate aftermath, VPSOs leveraged their local knowledge and dedication, deploying to communities like Kipnuk and Kwigillingok to provide essential emergency management support. Their efforts made a significant difference.

Furthermore, AVCP provided leadership and operational personnel to manage the response effort across the Yukon-Kuskokwim branch and beyond. This included direct support in numerous ways, such as managing donations, assisting with material transportation, organizing volunteers, hiring emergency repair workers, and helping survivors register with the state individual assistance program. The impact of AVCP has been profound. Without their involvement, the effort to evacuate and support disaster survivors, stabilize communities and infrastructure, and conduct emergency repairs would have been nearly impossible.

That's when Tlingit & Haida's Public Safety (T&H) Team saw a need, traveling from the Southeast Alaska Panhandle to Southwest Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta to provide direct support to the AVCP. With several recent disasters in their home region, Tlingit & Haida are experienced emergency managers. Their team was able to connect with AVCP and share their knowledge, earned from recent disaster responses.

"In the long run this will foster strength in tribal governments to respond, which will also help the state in its response. More consistency will happen. It feels like a new era in communication and cooperation," said T&H Sabrina Grubitz.

This inter-tribal partnership was critical in supporting the impacted Alaskans – many of whom have lost everything.

“It was like having someone understand what I was going through,” said Amy Hendricks, Incident Commander from AVCP. “It was immensely helpful, and it’s something we’d like to see in future disasters.”

As winter arrives and initial response efforts transition to a long-term recovery, the work is far from over, and AVCP will continue to lead the recovery effort. And while that road to recovery may be long; what will be longer though, is the strength in community and the partnerships that were built during this response.



Tlingit and Haida Emergency Managers deployed to Bethel to assist with disaster response operations. Left to right, Louis Tagaban, Sabrina Grubitz, and Josh Clark.

“We can’t say enough about Tlingit and Haida’s effort to support AVCP,” said DHS&EM Director Bryan Fisher. “We are accomplishing two things simultaneously: first, we are providing direct support to AVCP so they can sustain and fully engage in their response activities; and second, we are helping AVCP and Tlingit and Haida (T&H) build capacity

so each organization will be better equipped to respond to future disasters. This capacity building is vital in Alaska, where tribes represent the main forms of government in unincorporated areas lacking robust city or borough governance.”

The State of Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM) successfully facilitated Tlingit and Haida’s support to AVCP through a Mutual Aid Agreement.

To further support AVCP’s prolonged response effort, the State is pursuing additional opportunities for tribe-to-tribe support, including intrastate assistance from other Alaska tribal organizations. Furthermore, the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) is being utilized in a pioneering way. While EMAC, which allows states to borrow emergency management specialists from other states during disasters, has brought 63 personnel from 20 states to Alaska for this storm response, it has never before been used to engage tribal emergency managers from other states. Currently, talks are underway to bring the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina and the Muscogee Creek Nation in Oklahoma, to Alaska to for tribe-to-tribe support.

“Alaska has one of the most forward-leaning emergency management agencies in the nation,” Fisher noted. “This is due to the high number of disasters we face and the challenging environment we operate in. We simply have no option but to work together. Helping tribal entities build their emergency management capabilities is done with one goal in mind: to make sure we are taking care of every Alaskan during and after a disaster.”