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By Jeremy Zidek

Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management

Media Contact: Jeremy Zidek, 907-428-7077

Governor Dunleavy Declares Northwest Arctic Borough Extreme Cold Utility Disruption a Disaster

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Governor Mike Dunleavy has issued a state disaster declaration in response to widespread utility disruption caused by extreme cold across the Northwest Arctic Borough. The declaration activates the State of Alaska Public Assistance program, providing essential funding to restore damaged critical infrastructure to pre-disaster conditions.

Over the past several months, sustained extreme cold has pushed local infrastructure to its breaking point. In multiple communities, utility providers have struggled to maintain power and keep water and sewer systems operational. The communities of Selawik, Shungnak, Ambler, and Buckland have all experienced significant freeze-ups in their water and sewer systems, which now require extensive thawing and permanent repairs.

Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management Director Bryan Fisher stated that the communities and the Northwest Arctic Borough have done everything possible with the resources and personnel available to keep these systems online. He noted that with this declaration, the state will be able to reimburse communities for emergency protective measures, assist with the utility restoration effort, and fund permanent repair projects.

The state Public Assistance program is designed to restore critical infrastructure such as buildings, roads, utilities, bridges, and communications to a pre-disaster condition. Local jurisdictions, tribal organizations, and certain non-profits with documented disaster damages may be eligible to apply for Public Assistance disaster recovery grants.

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Media Contact: Jeremy Zidek, 907-428-7077, Jeremy.Zidek@alaska.gov