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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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*Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*

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### **Governor Dunleavy issues Disaster Declaration for 2026 Spring Floods**

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska – In response to serious ice jam flooding in the communities of Chalkyitsik and Hughes, Governor Mike Dunleavy today declared a disaster emergency to support state emergency response and recovery. In addition to the state's disaster response coordinated through the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), the declaration activates the State of Alaska Individual, Public Assistance, and Temporary Housing Recovery programs. The areas declared include the Yukon Flats Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA) and the Yukon-Koyukuk REAA.

Annual river breakups significantly increase the risk of flooding for Alaskan communities. Ice jams occur when intact river ice and snowmelt are obstructed by river bends and other geographic features. These jams often extend several miles, creating massive reservoirs of water that can rapidly breach riverbanks and inundate inland areas.

In Chalkyitsik on the Black River, an ice jam caused rapidly rising water on May 7, impacting several homes and low-lying areas. SEOC River Watch aircraft overflew the community and provided updates on water levels and the ice run.

In Hughes, located on the Koyukuk River, an ice jam caused flooding late Saturday May 9 that impacted the community school, residential structures, and the runway with ice and flood waters. During the night, 61 of the 78 community members evacuated to the tribal hall shelter. The community obtained 100% accountability on all residents and has supplies at the shelter. SEOC, in coordination with the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), responded to the flooding and an Alaska State Trooper helicopter delivered a TCC response Village Public Safety Officer and water, while evacuating an ill pediatric patient from the community to Fairbanks for care.

SEOC and TCC continue to support the local Incident Command and SEOC River Watch aircraft plans to overfly the community to provide an update on flood conditions.

The River Watch program represents a long-standing partnership between the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management and the National Weather Service. For over forty years, this collaboration has combined the expertise of the Alaska-Pacific River Forecast Center with emergency management personnel to monitor rivers susceptible to ice jam flooding. These specialized teams provide critical aerial surveillance, issue timely flood warnings, and offer direct support to communities during emergencies.

The state Public Assistance program focuses on restoring essential infrastructure, including buildings, roads, utilities, bridges, and communications systems, to their pre-disaster state. Local jurisdictions, tribal organizations, and specific non-profits with documented damages may qualify for these recovery grants.

Additionally, the Individual Assistance and Temporary Housing programs help families and individuals recover from damage to primary residences and essential personal property.

Detailed registration information for Individual Assistance will be released in the coming days.  
[DHS&EM | Individual Assistance](#)

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