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Rural Resiliency Workshop to be Held in Bethel, Alaska in February 2025

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska This February, the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) and the Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM) will partner to host a *Rural Resiliency Workshop* in Bethel, Alaska.

The three-day event, February 25–27, 2025, will bring representatives from 13 communities across the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta to Bethel to learn vital skills related to disaster preparedness and response. Topics covered will include disaster response options, past disaster impacts, grants, rural law enforcement, shelter operations, oil spill response, and more.

“Increasing regional public safety and emergency response coordination and preparedness is a top priority for AVCP. We are excited to partner with DHS&EM on these workshops that support our Tribe’s emergency preparedness. In addition, we are also very pleased to offer public safety officer emergency response training for TPO/VPO and VPSOs as part of this week’s activities,” said Vivian Korthuis, AVCP’s CEO.

The workshop will host three members from each of the 13 communities, including one local law enforcement officer (Tribal Police Officer or Village Police Officer). AVCP’s Village Public Safety Officers (VPSO) from around the region will also be in attendance. VPSOs/VPOs and TPOs play a critical role in disaster response by liaising with city and tribal leadership to ensure the safety of residents. Including local and regional law enforcement officers in the Rural Resiliency Workshop will foster closer collaboration among community leaders and emergency responders before, during, and after disaster events.

“Throughout the years, AVCP and DHS&EM have worked together during the response and recovery phases of many disasters,” said Bryan Fisher, Director of DHS&EM.

“AVCP has provided supplies to disaster-impacted communities, supported shelters

both in communities and in Bethel, provided transportation to and from impacted areas, enhanced law enforcement presence, and helped restore critical infrastructure. This workshop expands our partnership to focus on the pre-disaster preparedness phase.”

A key component of the workshop will be a tabletop exercise, where participants will explore the steps communities can take before, during, and after a severe coastal storm—such as the 2022 Typhoon Merbok that impacted all the invited communities. In addition, participants will discuss the disaster declaration process and review disaster recovery programs that help individuals and communities recover after a disaster.

DHS&EM will also work with communities to update their *Small Community Emergency Response Plans*, customized flipbooks that contain essential, community-specific information for responding to the first 72 hours of a disaster.

DHS&EM typically conducts Rural Resiliency Workshops in different locations each year to reach communities across Alaska. However, the workshop will return to Bethel in the fall of 2025 to assist an additional 11–13 coastal communities in preparing for coastal sea storms.

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