



## UTAH NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS

12953 S. Minuteman Drive, Draper, UT 84020

P: (801) 432-4407 - F: (801) 432-4677 - [www.ut.ngb.army.mil](http://www.ut.ngb.army.mil)

Twitter: @UTNationalGuard - Facebook.com/utahnationalguard

**Press Release 13-047, 18 September 2013**

**Contact: Capt. Ryan Sutherland, (801) 390-4921**

### **For Immediate Release**

### **Utah Guardmembers Assist Alaska Flood Survivors**

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – Recently, the Utah National Guard responded to a request from the Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management in the aftermath of the spring flooding, which affected residents along the Yukon River.

Soldiers from the Utah Guard's 128<sup>th</sup> Mobile Public Affairs Detachment (MPAD) arrived in Anchorage Sept. 2, where they worked with personnel from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the State of Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM) and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

Alaska suffered severe flooding along the Yukon River in May and June after a longer-than-normal winter and rapid increase in temperatures. A river ice jam occurred near Galena, a remote Alaskan community only accessible by boat or air, which caused flooding and widespread damage by high water and large sheets of ice. Out of the eight Alaskan communities affected by the spring floods, Galena was the hardest-hit community.

Alaska received a presidential disaster declaration June 25, providing individual and public assistance to the affected boroughs (counties). Local, state, and federal agencies with assistance from volunteer organizations have worked tirelessly in the rebuilding efforts.

Flooding damaged 90 percent of the homes in Galena, a small but vital hub community along the Yukon River, knocking out power in the community, and brought a number of secondary problems, including damaged infrastructure and hundreds of pounds of game meat that spoiled in residents' refrigerators and freezers.

Galena is also important for its educational opportunities offered to the interior Alaskan communities. The Sidney C. Huntington School provides quality K-8 education to

-more-

surrounding communities, and the Galena Interior Learning Academy offers grades 9 through 12 and postsecondary adult vocational certification in aviation, automotive technology, cosmetology, health sciences and culinary arts.

During flooding, as many as 300 residents were evacuated to surrounding cities such as Fairbanks, located 270 miles to the east. Many of the evacuees are still sheltered outside of Galena while rebuilding efforts continue.

Federal, state, and community organizations face several challenges in their rebuilding efforts. Building supplies, fuel and food have to be shipped in by barge or air, as the nearest highway is 180 miles away. The upcoming winter season further complicates the relief effort as larger shipments can no longer be shipped by barge as rivers freeze and become impassable.

According to FEMA estimates, barges have transported nearly 320,000 pounds of building materials, sheltering supplies and donated items on more than 60 shipments to affected communities, most of which went to Galena.

Utah Guardmembers Capt. Ryan Sutherland, of Salt Lake City, and Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Brock Jones, of Kaysville, worked in the Joint Field Office in Anchorage and in the field at the city of Galena along the Yukon River. The scope of their duties included documentation of the rebuilding efforts in Galena and the timely and accurate release of critical information to the flood survivors through a community newsletter. The newsletter provided information such as winter shelter plans, mass-care and feeding programs, donation centers, volunteer information and deadlines for requesting state and federal assistance.

Information on how to support the victims of the Alaska 2013 floods can be found at Ready.Alaska.Gov. Cash donations will be used to replace basic household items, specific items needed for winter and food used to sustain families through the long winters. If you have goods to donate, be sure to confirm the need through a relief organization before donating.

Updates on the recovery can be found on Facebook.com/ReadyAlaska or Twitter @AlaskaDHSEM.

Photos of the Spring Flood relief efforts in Alaska can be found at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/utahnationalguard/sets/72157635589409253/>