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****PRESS RELEASE****

INCIDENT COMMAND TEAM RESPONDS TO SWAN LAKE LOOP FAILURE

Date: February 14, 2024
From: Office of the City Manager, Tessa Baldwin
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KOTZEBUE, ALASKA - In response to the recent water main failure along Swan Lake Loop, the City of Kotzebue, the Native Village of Kotzebue, and the Northwest Arctic Borough have joined forces to establish an Incident Command Center. This collaborative effort aims to efficiently manage resources, coordinate response efforts, and provide support to the affected community. In addition to the municipal government leadership team NANA Regional Corporation, Maniilaq Association, State of Alaska Department of Transportation, OTZ Telephone, Northwest Inupiat Housing Authority, Northwest Arctic Borough School District, Kotzebue Electric Company, and Kikitagruk Inupiat Corporation joined the meeting.

The Native Village of Kotzebue has been in partnership e in providing essential support to the affected residents on Swan Lake Loop. Responding to the water main failure, the Native Village of Kotzebue has ensured that every home on the loop received bottled water, a generous donation facilitated through contributions from Coca-Cola and Alaska Commercial Co. In collaboration with Public Works, the Native Village has donated 100 five-gallon buckets to be distributed to residents, addressing immediate needs. Additionally, recognizing the need for non-potable water storage, the Native Village of Kotzebue has taken steps to enhance water accessibility by ordering 32-gallon, non-food grade containers.

In recognition of the severity of the situation, the Northwest Arctic Borough has declared an emergency disaster, playing a crucial role in expediting the process to push this disaster status through to the State of Alaska. Demonstrating financial commitment to the relief efforts, the Borough has allocated \$30,000 in funding to the City of Kotzebue, assisting in covering the escalating costs associated with managing this emergency. In addition, the Village Improvement Commission has stated that a \$25,000.00 in additional funding to aid the emergency for Kotzebue.

Other partners have confirmed their assistance in this emergency situation. Kotzebue Electric Association (KEA) is supplying recovered heat from their generators to the city water system as a secondary source. They are curtailing their wind turbines to keep as many generators operating as possible. Maniilaq, Northwest Arctic Borough School District, and Parks & Recreation are

actively collaborating to provide bathroom stalls, shower facilities, and laundry units to cater to the needs of residents without water access. In addition, recognizing the critical need for communication, OTZ Telephone has offered to loan cell phones to individuals working in the field, ensuring seamless connectivity for those addressing the ongoing challenges.

On the state level, the Department of Transportation is lending practical support to the response efforts following the water main failure on Swan Lake Loop. They have offered the services of their CDL driver to assist the City of Kotzebue in delivering water to affected residents, demonstrating a collaborative commitment to addressing the community's immediate needs.

The collaborative approach adopted by the municipal government leadership and regional organizations underscores the spirit of unity and resilience that defines the region. As efforts to address the water main failure continue, the community remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting one another and rebuilding stronger than before.

The Incident Command Center facilitates communication, decision-making, and resource allocation. Representatives from each entity work closely together, leveraging their respective strengths and knowledge to address immediate needs and plan for the recovery phase.

For more information regarding the contents of this press release, please contact Rachel Belamour, City of Kotzebue, Department of Public Relations by email at rbelamour@kotzebue.org or by phone at 907-442-3401.

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