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****PRESS RELEASE****

City of Kotzebue Declares an Emergency Disaster due to Water Main Failure

Date: February 8, 2024

From: Office of the City Manager, Tessa Baldwin

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Kotzebue, Alaska – On February 8, 2024, the City of Kotzebue declared an emergency disaster as a result of a water main failure. The City of Kotzebue responded to a critical situation at the Water Treatment Plant on Monday, February 5, 2024. Director Russ Ferguson, being on-site, conveyed that the warm weather had triggered a change, which resulted in a blockage on Swan Lake water main loop and subsequent bursts in the line. Due to the failure in the Swan Lake Watermain loop 190 homes have been impacted with over 40 of the homes reporting to have no running water as of this morning.

City Manager Tessa Baldwin stated, “the safety and well-being of our residents are impacted as water is essential. In addition, if there were to be a fire on this loop, we would have to take extensive measure to ensure our fire department can properly respond to emergencies.” The City of Kotzebue Fire Department did a flow check on all hydrants on Swan Lake Loop, and determined the main had begun freezing, despite pressure from the water plant. The City of Kotzebue states that this is an all-hands on deck effort with city hall, public works, the fire department, and several other organizations working to remediate the issue.

Furthermore, Line Maintenance initiated excavation efforts, however, encountered challenges as the hard, frozen clay ground wore out equipment excavator quickly. Anticipating potential complications, it is estimated that an additional two to three days would be required before the blockage could be completely removed.

Remediation efforts include; the Public Works department working around the clock to respond to this critical incident. Public works is working with a contractor to excavate the water loop. Additionally, Line Maintenance has purchased 50 five-gallon buckets with lids, and they have begun water deliveries to all residents on Swan Lake Loop. Public Works has initiated efforts to unfreeze water lines for residents on this loop. With the growing number of residents affected, regional organizations have also taken an active role in aiding residents in receiving water.

The Public Works department extends its gratitude to the residents for their patience and cooperation during this challenging period. Regular updates on the progress of resolving the water supply issue will be communicated through official channels and local media.

For more information on 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.