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Governor Bill Walker
STATE OF ALASKA

April 9, 2015

The Honorable Kevin Meyer
President of the Senate
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 111
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

The Honorable Mike Chenault
Speaker of the House
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 208
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear President Meyer and Speaker Chenault:

This letter is to inform you that on April 7, 2015, I declared a disaster for unprecedented flooding on the Dalton Highway between Mile 390 and 415, about 25-30 miles from Deadhorse. The Sagavanirktok River (a.k.a. Sag River) experienced a major ice jam that resulted in this flooding, which began March 13 and continues. In some areas, the Sag River continues to produce 24 to 30 inches of water atop the road surface. Diverting the water away from the road is difficult due to the flat topography of the area.

The flooding has severely impacted and damaged the highway infrastructure, including the road surface, embankments, and drainage structures. This has restricted or prohibited travel, causing economic hardship to local, regional, and international business. Immediate road repairs and flow diversion efforts are urgently needed to alleviate continued flooding. The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) estimates the water diversion and trenching effort may continue for some time.

The State Disaster Declaration is required to seek emergency funding through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and waive State permitting requirements for the response and recovery work. Therefore, no Disaster Relief Funds are required at this time. As FHWA funds become available, I will provide you notification of funding amounts provided.

I am providing you a copy of the disaster declaration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Walker".
Bill Walker
Governor

Enclosure

The Honorable Kevin Meyer
The Honorable Mike Chenault
Notification of Disaster Declaration
April 9, 2015
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cc: The Honorable Pete Kelly, Finance Committee Co-Chair, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Anna MacKinnon, Finance Committee Co-Chair, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Mark Neuman, Finance Committee Co-Chair, Alaska State House of
Representatives
The Honorable Steve Thompson, Finance Committee Co-Chair, Alaska State House of
Representatives
The Honorable Donald Olson, District T, Alaska State Senate
The Honorable Benjamin Nageak, District 40, Alaska State House of Representatives

STATE of ALASKA
DECLARATION OF DISASTER EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, beginning on March 13, 2015 and continuing, the Sagavanirktok (Sag) River experienced a major ice jam that resulted in unprecedented flooding between Mile 390 and 415 of the Dalton Highway about 25 to 30 miles south of Deadhorse; and

WHEREAS, road clearing and overflow diversion work has been ongoing since mid-March, and has been hampered by very cold temperatures, high winds, and low- to no-visibility conditions, and as a result, current estimates to complete restoration to permit safe travel on the Dalton Highway may take another four to six weeks; and

WHEREAS, in several locations, the Sag River continues to produce 24 to 30 inches of water atop the road surface, and this water is difficult to divert away from the road due to the flat topography of the area; and

WHEREAS, the flooding and emergency work have disrupted normal commercial and private traffic along the Dalton Highway, including critical fuel shipments to the petroleum production and distribution facilities at Deadhorse; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) is responsible for the maintenance of and repairs to the damaged roads and highways in these areas and has requested a declaration of disaster in order to accomplish the necessary emergency repairs and overflow diversion efforts; and

WHEREAS, the following conditions exist as a result of this disaster: severe impact and damage to highway infrastructure, including the road surface, embankments, and drainage structures; restricted or prohibited travel causing economic hardship to local, regional, and international business; an urgent need for immediate road repairs and flow diversion efforts to alleviate future threats to that infrastructure; and


WHEREAS, normal environmental permitting processes would likely impede or substantially delay the urgently required emergency repairs, and suspension of State environmental permitting requirements to restore the roads to pre-disaster condition is a reasonable and appropriate measure; and

WHEREAS, the severity and magnitude of the emergency are beyond the timely and effective response and recovery capability of DOT&PF, and immediate repairs and emergency assistance are required, and there are insufficient regularly appropriated funds to cover these requirements.

THEREFORE, on this 7th day of April 2015, under authority granted by Alaska Statute 26.23.020 (c), I hereby declare that a condition of disaster emergency exists along the Dalton Highway, and this condition is of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant a disaster declaration in order to provide assistance.

FURTHER, the Commissioner of DOT&PF is hereby directed to seek and utilize funding made available from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for these purposes which are considered necessary for disaster assistance and necessary administrative and disaster management expenses.

FURTHER, for the duration of this proclamation and under authority of AS 26.23.020(g) (1) and (7), I specifically order the suspension of those provisions of Alaska Statutes and regulations relating to any requirement for the DOT&PF to (a) obtain a lease from another State agency prior to entry upon the land; (b) obtain a permit, including land use permits and right of way permits, from another State agency prior to entry upon land; (c) obtain Water Use Permits or rights, including temporary rights, from another State agency prior to utilizing such resources; (d) obtain Fish Habitat Permits or Special Area Permits from another State agency; (e) obtain Wastewater Disposal Permits from another State agency; (f) obtain Section 106 Reviews pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 from another State agency; provided that the foregoing suspensions do not apply to any specific provision the suspension of which would create a violation of federal law or a violation of a requirement for the provision of federal emergency funding, and the foregoing suspensions may be supplemented by my further order to the Commissioner of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

By: 
Bill Walker
Governor