

Department of Public Safety's Commitment to Rural Alaskans



Alaska Department of Public Safety
Commissioner James Cockrell

House Tribal Affairs Committee
Tuesday, April 29, 2025



Department of Public Safety

Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs)

- VPSO is an established division, revitalized since 2018 to grow and strengthen this important work
- Salaries for VPSOs have been significantly improved
- VPSO staffing increased from 40 in 2020 to 92 in 2024
- DPS is committed to adding additional VPSOs until every village that wants a VPSO has one



Investigators in Western Alaska

- Established the first Major Crimes Unit in Western Alaska
 - Four Investigators
- Shortened response time for homicides and acute sexual assault for investigators
- Established Yukon-Kuskokwim Child Abuse Investigative Unit in 2024
 - Four Investigators



Missing & Murdered Indigenous Persons

2021 – DPS hires first MMIP Investigator

2021 – Governor's People First Initiative

2023 – Increased to four MMIP Investigators

2023 – DPS publishes the first Alaska specific MMIP Data Report

2023 – DPS mandates NamUS entries for all missing persons

2024 – DPS begins cultural awareness training with MMIP focus



Missing & Murdered Indigenous Persons Data

- 345 Missing Alaska Natives, American Indians, or Unknown Race
- 77% Environmental Factors
- 5% Suspicious

**As of March 31, 2025*



Department of Public Safety

Tribe & Village Engagement

- Hired two dedicated Tribal Liaisons within DPS
- Attended dozens of community meetings, listening sessions, townhall meetings, and public safety summits with Tribes and Villages



Thank You

Commissioner James Cockrell
Alaska Department of Public Safety

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