

State of Alaska, Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Alaska State Defense Force Whitepaper
02/13/2023

Vision: “Closest to home, Ready to serve.”

Mission: The Alaska State Defense Force (ASDF) supports the Alaska National Guard in collaborating with citizens, communities, native corporations, non-profit organizations, and governmental agencies to prepare, plan, respond, and recover from natural and man-made disasters.

Summary: Requesting \$2.1 million general fund appropriation to establish the Alaska State Defense Force as a new component/division within Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA), to create oversight, direction, and accountability for the program and meet operational and program requirements for expansion, training, and readiness to respond when called upon.

- ASDF is an organization of volunteers, enlisted under established statutes, whose role is to serve in augmenting and complementing the Alaska National Guard and Alaska Naval Militia within the AKOM (Alaska Organized Militia).
- ASDF members are Alaskans from every region of the State who understand the impacts a disaster can have on a community, possess knowledge of the land, people, and environments, and are dedicated and committed to the safety and well-being of Alaskans.
- ASDF provides a valuable and unique opportunity for those who have a desire to serve and give back as its members live and stay in their communities.
- ASDF members provide immediate “boots-on-the-ground” support for emergency and disaster response when called upon by the Governor or Adjutant General.

Background/Overview:

Per Alaska Statute 26.05.100, the Alaska State Defense Force is a component of the Alaska Organized Militia and exists as an “augmentation” force to the Alaska National Guard or the Alaska Naval Militia.

AS 26.05.100 states:

A state militia, known as the Alaska State Defense Force, may be organized through voluntary enlistments under regulations as to discipline and training that may be prescribed by the governor. During the time that the Alaska National Guard or the Alaska Naval Militia, or any part of either of them, is not available to the state by reason of active federal service, or the National Guard or Naval Militia requires augmentation to perform its state mission, the governor may activate the Alaska State Defense Force.

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One of the primary mission elements of DMVA is to accomplish varying operations in the state or around the world. DMVA is always prepared to respond to, and assist in the recovery from, domestic disasters and emergencies. The AKOM is an integral part of this mission in response to domestic needs.

In order to further the department's mission, the ASDF seeks to expand its enrollment from 200 members to 500 over the coming years, to increase community emergency capacity and resiliency, while also helping to engage remote communities utilizing this volunteer force.

- Such an increase in membership will significantly increase its boots-on-the-ground presence, supporting the Alaska National Guard (AKNG) during statewide emergencies.
- Most recently, the ASDF rapidly mobilized more than 20 of its members in the aftermath of Typhoon Merbok across Western Alaska just hours after the storm subsided.
- The mobilized ASDF members provided the AKNG with boots-on-the-ground damage assessment in affected communities and relayed that info back to the State Emergency Operations Center and AKNG Joint Operations Command prior to the subsequent mobilization.
- ASDF members augmented the AKNG and Naval Militia during clean-up operations and later assisted community members with filing claims for state and federal assistance.

Overview of budget proposal:

- The current budget proposal allocates \$2.1 million to the ASDF as a new component within DMVA, for the purposes of expanding operational capabilities during disasters.
- Additionally, there is a \$400k transfer of existing funding from the Office of the Commissioner to the ASDF component.

Administrative Support:

The proposed new state positions would enable the ASDF to manage the essential operational and administrative functions of a state organization including:

- Director/Commander: oversight, direction, and accountability
- State-level communication with internal and external audiences
- Establishing and maintaining policies and procedures
- Administrative support for travel, procurement, property and inventory management, personnel administration, and other state tasks

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Operational Support:

The ASDF looks to increase its enrollment and capabilities, while continuing its transition to become a Division within the DMVA.

Funding would support:

- State Active Duty activations to assist communities during disasters
- Standing up a Division within DMVA
- Recruitment efforts in rural areas of Alaska
- Training to support mission readiness requirements
- Equipment procurement and maintenance: priority project would be an upgrade of communications equipment to ensure interoperability with National Guard and other emergency response organizations
- Travel for recruitment, retention, and training activities
- Building maintenance (leasing space within armories, rentals, storage, etc.), utilities and supplies

This funding is critical to assist the ASDF reach its goal of increasing enrollment from 200 to 500 members in the coming years as ASDF Leadership deploys a phased approach to expanding the organization.

Phase 1 – Recruit and establish a leadership team in Southeast Alaska

- The team will be responsible for recruiting and developing training programs
- Develop community relations

Phase 2 – Establish more local community teams in Western Alaska

- Build on existing success in rural Alaska to create more teams in more communities
- Use existing relations with tribal and village governments to expand into other villages

Phase 3 – Recruit and establish a leadership team in the Aleutians

- Develop community relations to determine community needs
- Discuss with community leaders and State Agencies to determine most probable disaster to drive training programs, needed resources
- Establish a place to meet and train

Phase 4 – Expand regional command and control

ASDF currently has two (2) battalions for regional command and control. As regions grow, the ASDF will establish additional battalions.

- 1st Battalion – Northwest Alaska
- 2nd Battalion – Southwest Alaska
- 3rd Battalion – Southeast and Coastal Alaska
- Brigade Headquarters and Headquarters Company – Southcentral Alaska

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Additional ASDF Information:

Currently, 23 ASDF detachments serve across Alaska. Expansion would establish more detachments in communities, using a small team concept, with members who possess local knowledge and traditions. This format helps build community confidence and address specific community needs.

Each team will consist of members trained in incident command, basic medical knowledge, communications, domain awareness (how to assess surroundings during an emergency to report to other agencies), and providing support, when requested, through the normal emergency response resource request process.

ASDF has implemented the following to improve capabilities:

- Physical Fitness Program
- Requirements for professional development courses
- An annual evaluation system
- A formal promotion system

ASDF membership consists of a diverse group of volunteers including

- Former military experience
- Medical professionals
- Engineers
- Information technology specialists
- Occupational health and safety
- HAZMAT
- Other professional certifications such as accounting, finance, etc.

ASDF members support Alaska when called upon by providing

- Community outreach and participation
- Rural Alaska Resiliency Partnerships
- Emergency response and support
- Support of civil authorities
- Domain awareness
- Communications operations
- Volunteering in their communities