

Prince of Wales added to state disaster declaration for Wrangell landslide

By Jack Darrell, KRBD - Ketchikan - December 7, 2023



Downed trees and mud block the road leading into Thorne Bay on Prince of Wales Island. (Photo courtesy of City of Thorne Bay)

On Tuesday, Gov. Mike Dunleavy amended a state disaster declaration stemming from the **deadly Nov. 20 landslide** in Wrangell to include communities on Prince of Wales Island.

The same storm system that hit Wrangell **also caused widespread flooding and landslides** on Prince of Wales Island, which includes the communities of Hydaburg and Craig.

With the governor's amendment to the declaration, residents of the island who were impacted by the weather event now qualify for state disaster relief.

During the Nov. 20 storm, roads and culverts were washed out on Prince of Wales Island. Power poles were snapped in half. Residents reported multiple power outages.

Wrangell's landslide was the deadliest in recent memory in Alaska. The full extent of the damage is still unknown.

The state and FEMA, or the Federal Emergency Management Agency, will be visiting Wrangell and Prince of Wales to conduct a damage assessment. Jeremy Zidek, with the state's Division of

Homeland Security and Emergency Management, said the state already conducted an assessment to amend the declaration but they hope to get federal assistance too.



“The purpose is really to partner with FEMA, go out there, take a look at the damages, verify those. So, if we do request federal assistance, we’ll have FEMA on board with what was damaged. If the federal government does declare a disaster, 75% of the cost is covered by FEMA and 25% of the cost would be covered by the state,” said Zidek. “At the current moment, with our state disaster declaration, the state’s disaster recovery programs would cover 100% of the cost.”

The state and FEMA will be on the ground in Wrangell and on Prince of Wales beginning Monday to document damages. Zidek says this won’t look any different for the people affected by the slides and flooding. It’s just assistance coming from a different pot of money. But for some, he said, the pot of money can seem hard to find.



“It’s a kind of a complicated program, we always try to maximize the benefit that we can provide to people. We work in conjunction with insurance. And, you know, it is kind of a process,” Zidek said. “Some folks are not eligible for grants. And but some folks are, and they really have to fill out that application and go through the process in order for us to determine that what they’re eligible for.”

Zidek encouraged residents of Wrangell and Prince of Wales Island who were affected by the landslides or flooding to register for individual assistance at ready.alaska.gov/ia or by calling 844-445-7131.

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