

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

March 22, 2011

8:05 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Cathy Engstrom Munoz, Chair
Representative Neal Foster, Vice Chair
Representative Alan Austerman
Representative Alan Dick
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Sharon Cissna
Representative Berta Gardner

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

OVERVIEW: EMERGENCY DISASTER PREPAREDNESS IN ALASKA

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

JOE MCLAUGHLIN, MD, MPH, State Epidemiologist
Division of Public Health
Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a presentation entitled "The Japanese Nuclear Crisis: What it Means for Alaska."

CHRIS LABORDE, Preparedness Program Manager
Division of Public Health
Department of Health and Social Services
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the presentation, answered questions.

KRISTIN RYAN, Director
Division of Environmental Health
Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During presentations, answered questions.

DR. BERND JILLY, PhD, MT (ASCP), Chief
Public Health Laboratories
Division of Public Health
Department of Health and Social Services
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During presentation, answered questions.

CLYDE PEARCE, Radiology Health Specialist/Chief
Public Health Laboratories
Division of Public Health
Department of Health and Social Services
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During presentation, answered questions.

ALICE EDWARDS, Director
Division of Air Quality
Department of Environmental Conservation
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During presentation, answered questions.

MAJOR GENERAL TOM KATKUS, Adjutant General, Commissioner
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Fort Richardson, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided comments regarding Alaska's tsunami modeling and emergency preparedness.

MIKE O'HARE, Deputy Director
Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a presentation of Alaska's tsunami modeling and emergency preparedness.

TOM MATTICE, Emergency Programs Coordinator & Avalanche Forecaster
City & Borough of Juneau
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Reviewed the efforts in Southeast to achieve emergency preparedness and response.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:05:06 AM](#)

CHAIR CATHY ENGSTROM MUNOZ called the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. Representatives Dick, Saddler, Cissna, and Munoz were present at the call to order. Representatives Foster, Austerman, and Gardner arrived as the meeting was in progress.

Overview: Emergency Disaster Preparedness in Alaska

[8:05:20 AM](#)

CHAIR MUNOZ announced that the only order of business would be an overview of emergency disaster preparedness in Alaska.

[8:05:55 AM](#)

JOE MCLAUGHLIN, MD, MPH, State Epidemiologist, Division of Public Health, began by saying:

If they're only three things that I can impart on you all today, these would be the three that I would choose:

- 1) There is no immediate or anticipated threat for harmful levels of radiation to reach Alaska;
- 2) Alaska's seafood is unlikely to be affected;
- 3) This is an important reminder that all Alaskans should assemble a home emergency kit and a family response plan.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN then reviewed a framework that provides some of the key response measures for which public health agencies are responsible during a radiation emergency. Public health agencies have a duty to inform the public, health care providers, and others regarding steps that can be taken to prevent undue radiation exposure during a radiation emergency. Public health agencies also have a responsibility to protect the public from radiation exposure through providing recommendations about shelter-in-place and/or evacuation, distribution of radiation medications, and restricting consumption of contaminated food. Further responsibilities of public health agencies include decreasing psychological effects of radiation exposure as well as performing long-term follow-up for exposed persons, which includes case identification and tracking and access to care. To date DHSS has responded to numerous media requests and issued many press releases and messages through social media. The department has also issued an epidemiology

bulletin, which has been distributed to over 900 people in Alaska. The aforementioned was primarily geared toward health care providers. The message has been the same through all the media outlets. The principal messages have been that there's no anticipated threat to the health of Alaskans; Alaskans shouldn't take potassium iodide at this time; ongoing monitoring and communicating with local, state, and federal partners regarding the situation; and the incident in Japan serves as an important reminder to be prepared for an emergency. In terms of being prepared for an emergency the slide entitled "What can Alaskans do to be prepared for an emergency?" lists the items necessary to create a home emergency supply kit. He also pointed out that Alaskans should create a vehicle emergency supply kit, develop a family response plan, and practice the plan. With regard to Alaska's radiation monitoring, Alaska's monitoring stations continue to report normal background levels of radiation. There are five Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) monitoring stations in Alaska. The three stations that are currently reporting are in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau. He noted that one station in Juneau is specifically geared to report gamma radiation information. The three monitoring stations that will soon be reporting are located in Dutch Harbor, Juneau, and Nome. The recently installed monitor in Juneau will report beta radiation information. Mr. McLaughlin said that if radiation levels increase substantially, the Division of Health would measure specific isotopes to determine whether steps are necessary to protect the public's health. He noted that available data can be found at the DHSS home page. He then turned to the topic of protecting the food supply; the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (USFDA) is closely monitoring the situation. In fact, USFDA is performing increased and targeted product sampling at the border. He highlighted that less than 4 percent of U.S. imported foods come from Japan. Furthermore, current models indicate that U.S. fishing waters will remain safe. He shared a quote from a recent USFDA fax: "The great quantity of water in the Pacific Ocean rapidly and effectively dilutes radioactive material, so fish and seafood are likely to be unaffected."

[8:11:24 AM](#)

MR. MCLAUGHLIN then directed the committee's attention to a table that provides information regarding various levels of radiation exposure and the effects of those levels. He informed the committee that the average amount of radiation absorbed by a person in a day is 0.0016 Roentgen equivalent man (rem) of radiation whereas a chest x-ray will expose a person to 0.04 rem

of radiation. He further informed the committee that the average amount of radiation absorbed by a person in a year is 0.6 rem. In comparison, the maximum radiation reported at the main gate of the Fukushima Daiichi power plant on March 15th was 40 rem while the amount of radiation reported in Tokyo on the same day is 0.00008 rem.

[8:12:39 AM](#)

CHAIR MUNOZ asked if there is updated information for the [Japanese Nuclear Crisis].

MR. MCLAUGHLIN replied no, but offered to provide it to the committee [when available].

[8:12:53 AM](#)

MR. MCLAUGHLIN then informed the committee that exposure levels of 5-50 is where signs of acute radiation sickness occur as well as slightly increased risk of malformations, growth, and intelligence quotient (IQ) impacts, and failure for embryo to implant. In children and adults, such exposure can result in changes in blood chemistry, such as a decrease in white blood cell counts. The 50-90 rem range is where symptoms of acute radiation exposure, including nausea, fatigue, vomiting, hair loss, and diarrhea, occur. In terms of radiation medications, Mr. McLaughlin told the committee that radiation medications are included in the strategic national stockpile. The medications of potassium iodide, Prussian blue, and DTPA are used to prevent internal exposure to radiation. The medications of antiemetic, neupogen, and antibiotics are meant to help decrease the impact of radiation exposure. The aforementioned medications will only be deployed if there is a "credible threat." The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) has said: "No public health risks are expected in the United States." Therefore, there is no credible threat and the strategic national stockpile hasn't been deployed. In summary, Mr. McLaughlin related the following:

- There is no anticipated threat of harmful radiation exposure to Alaskans at this time
- Alaska's seafood is unlikely to be affected
- All Alaskans should be prepared for disasters
- More information is available at www.hss.state.ak.us

[8:15:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER inquired as to size of the stockpile for radiation medications.

[8:15:55 AM](#)

CHRIS LABORDE, Preparedness Program Manager, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services, answered that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) won't release any information regarding the location or amount of the strategic national stockpile.

[8:16:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FOSTER, recalling the testimony that Alaska's fish and seafood is "unlikely" to be impacted by the Japanese Nuclear Crisis, asked if there is any way in which to monitor whether Alaska's seafood is impacted.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN deferred to Ms. Ryan.

[8:17:14 AM](#)

KRISTIN RYAN, Director, Division of Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), related that DEC is working closely with the USFDA to perform monitoring in order to develop a monitoring protocol that can be relied upon. However, the protocol hasn't been developed yet.

[8:18:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FOSTER requested periodic updates on the [safety of Alaska's seafood]. He noted that Western Alaska residents are very concerned, especially due to their reliance on the fishing industry.

[8:18:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if there are any global impacts or impacts to the seafood in Japan's waters.

MS. RYAN stated that the USFDA is Alaska's main partner because it regulates all food imported into the U.S. About 4 percent of the foods [imported] to the U.S. are from Japan. The USFDA performs random sampling and monitoring of food that enters the U.S. Obviously, the USFDA will step up its radiation monitoring for food from Japan. At this point, no food shipments are coming from Japan, which will likely be the case for some time.

8:20:15 AM

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA questioned whether there are already websites that are monitoring the impacts of radiation on wildlife.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN deferred to Dr. JILLY.

8:22:00 AM

DR. BERND JILLY, PhD, MT (ASCP), Chief, Public Health Laboratories, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services, informed the committee that the EPA does have monitors in the ocean. Since it's a federal program, it's beyond the Alaska State Laboratories' purview. However, he echoed Mr. McLaughlin's testimony that Alaska does have land monitoring stations in order to provide an early warning for what's in the atmosphere. With regard to ocean monitoring, he deferred to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) or other federal agencies. In further response to Representative Cissna, Dr. Jilly confirmed that the Division of Public Health website, www.hss.state.ak.us, provides information [regarding the state's land monitoring efforts]. The website relates the historical average and maximum for this calendar year as well as the current readings of the Anchorage monitoring station. The division's website also includes a link to the EPA's website that has a graph that updates 15 times a day from Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau.

8:24:33 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER inquired as to the risk to the agricultural industry in Alaska.

MS. RYAN said that although the state does test food for many contaminants, it doesn't have the capacity to test for radiation. However, DEC is monitoring the air deposition that EPA measures. If there is a point when deposition occurs in Alaska, then DEC would work with its federal counterparts to perform sampling of Alaska's agricultural products. She noted that the majority of food produced in Alaska is from the sea, and therefore that's DEC's emphasis. Since no deposition is being seen at this point, there aren't necessarily concerns regarding contamination. Ms. Ryan mentioned that as part of the USFDA's radiation monitoring throughout the U.S., the USFDA randomly monitors milk and meat throughout the U.S., save in

Alaska. The aforementioned information is available and periodically updated on the USFDA website.

8:26:45 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER remarked that in case of a disaster in Alaska, Alaska may regret that it doesn't produce more food for its consumption.

8:27:03 AM

REPRESENTATIVE FOSTER inquired as to the difference between beta and gamma radiation. He also inquired as to when the Dutch Harbor, Juneau, and Nome sites will be reporting and will it be in the same format as the existing reporting sites.

8:27:58 AM

CLYDE PEARCE, Radiology Health Specialist/Chief, Public Health Laboratories, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services, explained that gamma radiation is more like x-rays in that it's pure energy, whereas beta and alpha radiation are particles of matter. Therefore, there could be fall out with beta or alpha radiation.

8:28:34 AM

REPRESENTATIVE FOSTER recalled that Bethel may receive a radiation monitoring station. He then inquired as to how soon the Dutch Harbor, Juneau (gamma), and Nome radiation stations will be reporting and will it be the same format as those stations currently reporting.

DR. JILLY said that's hard to answer because [the stations] belong to EPA and there are a number of technical issues that must be overcome and the appropriate quality control must be achieved prior to reporting data.

8:29:51 AM

REPRESENTATIVE DICK said that although he has confidence in the state's agencies and organizations [that would respond to a disaster], he doesn't have confidence in the like federal agencies. He pointed to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) response to Hurricane Katrina as an example of his lack of confidence in the federal agencies. Representative Dick then requested the state agencies to be hyper vigilant on

behalf of the state and to validate the information obtained [from federal agencies] because he didn't believe the message would be different regardless of the status of the situation. He then echoed Representative Saddler's comment regarding the need for Alaska to produce more of its food as he recalled that there is only three to six days worth of food in Alaska at any given time. Representative Dick then explained that the slow growing lichen absorbs radiation and has radiation levels higher than any other plant. The aforementioned has resulted in those who eat caribou to stop eating the caribou liver, where the radiation concentration is the worst. Therefore, he suggested that the state start sampling lichen and caribou livers.

MS. RYAN said that she is familiar with the concentration issues of lichen. She suggested that DEC would work with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) on this matter because it's more equipped to evaluate the health and safety of subsistence species. She offered to discuss Representative Dick's concerns with ADF&G and inquire of ADF&G's sampling efforts.

[8:33:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA recalled past Health Caucus meetings when mutual aid agreements were discussed. Mutual aid agreements, which ensure [various agencies are] networking and communicating with each other, are important in fields outside of health as well. However, she opined that it feels like such networking and communication is going downhill in regard to reaching communities. She then inquired as to the work going on in terms of [networking and communicating] with respect to preparedness.

MS. LABORDE informed the committee that the Preparedness Office has a community outreach program. The office along with the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM) and The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium go to the communities to answer their questions and deliver their message.

[8:35:51 AM](#)

CHAIR MUNOZ requested receipt of updated information on the radiation readings as it becomes available.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN agreed to do so.

[8:36:29 AM](#)

ALICE EDWARDS, Director, Division of Air Quality, Department of Environmental Conservation, addressed the latest status on the three additional monitoring stations. The Dutch Harbor site is currently operational and transmitting data, which will soon be found on the EPA website and the Division of Public Health's website also. The Nome monitor was damaged during shipment and a replacement monitor should've arrived yesterday. The Nome station is in the installation process. Although the Juneau monitor has been shipped, set up, and is collecting samples, it can't transmit real-time data until a new cable is received. In response to Chair Munoz, Ms. Edwards said that the existing monitoring stations aren't showing abnormal levels of radiation, rather they're showing normal background levels of radiation.

[8:38:47 AM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL TOM KATKUS, Adjutant General, Commissioner, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), related that it's a privilege to serve in uniform and to be thanked for his service. He then acknowledged and thanked the first responders, particularly those in Alaska because any emergency response efforts start locally. The Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs is responsible for the homeland security management function that synchronizes all the first responders' efforts to address an emergency. The goal is to have an efficient, fast, effective, and coordinated response from all. Therefore, the DMVA starts well in advance of the disaster to prepare scenarios, train, exercise, and communicate the message such that it's a singular message to assure confidence from the public. Furthermore, DMVA's efforts are coordinated in an escalated manner through the various resources the U.S. can bring to bear on a problem. Major General Katkus then reviewed the real-life scenario of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan on March 10th that illustrates the synchronized response efforts performed in Alaska.

[8:44:17 AM](#)

MIKE O'HARE, Deputy Director, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), began by informing the committee that the division plans for all hazards, including floods, avalanches, tsunamis, etcetera. He referred to [the division's model] as an effects-based model that operates in a collaborative partnership with state and federal agencies to bring all resources forward during any disaster in Alaska. The division, he emphasized, supports the local communities. Mr. O'Hare then turned to his

presentation and reiterated that it's all about partnerships. With regard to tsunamis, the program is comprised of multiple state and federal agencies, including the University of Alaska Geophysical Institute, the Alaska Geological and Geophysical Surveys Division, as well as many others. He noted that he and his staff receive alerts for earthquakes over a certain magnitude on a daily basis. Mr. O'Hare echoed earlier comments that staff work as a team to provide updated information to every community in Alaska. Relay systems, which are fairly fail safe, are used. He then referred to the slide entitled "Distant Threat," which is a map that specifies the tsunami hazard by community. All the coastal communities face a distant tsunami threat, such as experienced March 10th. There are also local tsunamis that arise due to a local threat such as a catastrophic earthquake; these are tsunamis for which there is no notice of the impending emergency. The next slide entitled "Warning Sirens and TsunamiReady Communities," is a map that specifies the communities that are prepared for a tsunami and/or have had a siren installed since 2006. The seven tsunami ready communities are: Seward, Homer, Kodiak, Sitka, Valdez, Yakutat, and Sand Point. Unalaska, Cordova, and Whittier are just completing their requirements. Other vulnerable communities being considered for tsunami ready community [status], which is voluntary, are Cold Bay, King Cove, and Saint Paul. To be tsunami ready a community must establish a 24-hour operational center and warning point; have more than one way to receive the tsunami warning signals; and develop a formal tsunami plan, which includes holding several exercises. He noted that the tsunami plan is updated every three years.

[8:51:31 AM](#)

MR. O'HARE moved on to the slide entitled "Community Notification Call Map," which identifies the various zones for tsunamis. Depending upon the modeling information, a prioritization for the zones is established, contact to those priority zones is made, and procedures are engaged. Ultimately, every zone is contacted. He reviewed how the process actually occurs. He then turned attention to the slide entitled "Inundation Maps," which uses Seward as an example. The Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management has a tsunami mapping team, which is comprised of the Alaska Earthquake Information Center, the previously mentioned geological and geophysical entities as well as the local communities. He indicated that using the geological and geophysical information as well as the local knowledge provides a reasonable understanding where the inundation will occur and

the high ground will be. The aforementioned provides the ability to develop the evacuation plans. He then shared a slide entitled "Hazard Mapping," which uses a map of Homer to illustrate the inundation path. Mr. O'Hare then reviewed the various warning sirens utilized in the various communities, which range from a simple siren to a siren that allows programmable and manual voice communication. The type chosen by a community is based on the community and the funding available. The funding for these siren systems is through the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program, the FEMA Homeland Hazard Mitigation Grant program, State Homeland Security Grant programs, and the NOAA Remote Community Alert Systems.

[8:56:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER inquired as to how often these systems are tested or drills are held.

MR. O'HARE answered that it's based on the community as there is no mandate.

[8:56:56 AM](#)

MR. O'HARE, in response to Representative Cissna, informed the committee that there are community emergency managers in most of the communities in Alaska. Part of the division's job is to provide resources, materials, assistance, and models to ensure that those emergency managers educate, train, and exercise the local citizens. If it's a hub community, the [division and emergency managers] work to ensure the satellite villages are involved with the training, education, and outreach mitigation opportunities or are used as an evacuation community. Basically, it's dependent upon the environment. Therefore, Mr. O'Hare opined that throughout there are leaders in the communities. Although they may not be the designated emergency managers, they are counted on and included in the education, training, and preparedness regime in order to ensure communities are better prepared. As mentioned earlier, it's performed in partnership with various other agencies, including DHSS, DEC, and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC).

[8:59:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA reminded the committee that the state leads in behavioral problems that are preventable. She opined that everyone is the victim of the poorest prepared. Therefore, she suggested that we have to go beyond [emergency preparedness]

in order to really make it [as a state] because economics need to be included. She then mentioned the problems with out-migration of communities.

9:01:34 AM

MR. O'HARE, continuing his presentation, reviewed photos of the various warning sirens in various communities, including the Kenai Peninsula Borough's mobile siren. He then moved on to the slide entitled "Tsunami Sign Program," which relates the various signs. The next slide entitled "Outreach and Education" has photographs of the "Quake Cabin," which is an earthquake simulator cabin that simulates a 5.0 earthquake and what really happens. The Quake Cabin is used at schools, businesses, state fairs, and safety events. He then reviewed the various outreach products the division provides. The main message of the outreach products is: "An educated and aware public with a plan of action will be able to adapt to any situation and respond accordingly." "Our mission is to outreach and educate Alaskans to be better prepared for any disaster," he related. He shared a photograph of the Valdez tsunami of 1964. Mr. O'Hare then told the committee that no community can prepare for what recently happened in Japan. Therefore, the [goal] is to educate citizens to have a plan, have a survival kit with seven days worth of food, water, and medicine. The next slide entitled "Hazards/Threats" reviews the various natural disasters and threats, including terrorism and the pandemic flu. With regard to the slide entitled "Partnerships," he reminded the committee [first and foremost] the division serves the local communities and uses partnerships to do so. In fact, he stated that the division is working well with the federal government. In closing, Mr. O'Hare said: "As Alaskans, as individuals, as neighbors, as community leaders, as state leaders, please for yourselves and for your constituents send the message out: 'Have a plan, build a kit, be informed, and be ready.'" The following website: www.ready.alaska.gov will help you identify the materials necessary to make an emergency kit.

9:07:08 AM

REPRESENTATIVE DICK directed attention to the slide entitled "Tsunami Notification Call," and highlighted that it denotes the small town of Lime Village, 17 residents. Representative Dick informed the committee that he represents Native villages as well as many firm constitutionalists, who don't fear natural disasters. He said that his constituents are concerned about

martial law, and therefore he inquired as to what it would look like in the state.

MAJOR GENERAL KATKUS responded that it would be directed by the communities, which are the leaders to whom the division provides support. He related that the chain of support and response to an emergency will be as follows: the community, the state, and then the federal government depending upon the magnitude of the emergency. "That martial law is going to be the extent possible to maintain good order and discipline and address the issue, and it is going to be synchronized with local communities, local governors ... and it's going to be the federal agency that's stepping in to support the governor, unequivocally," he clarified.

[9:10:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked if the division's website includes any tips for communities to work together to problem solve on their own, including relationship building and outmigration. She related that the Anchorage neighborhoods in her district used to be better at the aforementioned coordination.

MR. O'HARE acknowledged that remote communities have unique dynamics, including having multiple leadership that don't necessarily get along. The division enters a community and tries to address it as a whole. Still, he agreed that there are issues with the aforementioned. With regard to Anchorage, he highlighted that it has put together the beginnings of a phenomenal neighborhood watch program, regarding which he offered to provide information to the committee.

[9:13:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER pointed out that many Alaskans haven't experienced a major earthquake and its effects. He inquired as to when Alaskans are informed about any aspect of the emergency preparedness system.

MR. O'HARE informed the committee that the emergency alert system has been used for the occasional Amber Alert. The Alaska Emergency Alert System (EAS) is a relationship with the Alaska Broadcaster's Association that provides a statewide relay of information, warnings, alerts, and etcetera. That relay system is tested monthly. The warning initially comes from the Alaska State Troopers and then is relayed via the division; alerts are

also spread via television. The statewide alert system occurs in any instance in which the public needs to be notified.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER related that on March 10th he was watching the news on television when he first heard the news of the earthquake in Japan and received a tsunami advisory.

MR. O'HARE noted that the alert levels proceed through advisory, watch, and warning. The National Weather Service is trying to simplify the alert levels. In further response to Representative Saddler, Mr. O'Hare confirmed that the alert is publicized through the television, radio broadcast, ham radio, and NOAA weather radio. For those communities without NOAA weather radio access or sporadic communication capability, the ham radio operators and marine band works are relied upon. Furthermore, the division prepares the hub communities to be able to alert the satellite communities in their area. The Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) system is a day-to-day administrative communications system with first responders along the road system, but it's not part of the emergency alert system.

[9:17:38 AM](#)

CHAIR MUNOZ asked if Alaska has officially responded to Japan in terms of providing assets or support.

MAJOR GENERAL KATKUS related that Alaska has made offers. However, it's critical to synchronize the good intentions and good will. The Alaska National Guard is flying over with active duty personnel as well as support aircraft in order to support the federal effort as far as the military and the State Department. The aforementioned addresses the current requests and the [division] is prepared to step forward with future requests.

[9:18:39 AM](#)

MAJOR GENERAL KATKUS, in response to Representative Gardner, clarified that he doesn't know of all the requests through the various departments and divisions. With regard to the military requests that he is aware of, the division has coordinated through the National Guard Bureau and the nation. The [division and the military] are responding where requested. In further response to Representative Gardner, Major General Katkus confirmed that there are no Alaska National Guardsmen in Japan

or on the ground. However, they are involved in the aircraft supporting the U.S. efforts in Japan.

9:19:34 AM

CHAIR MUNOZ inquired as to how Alaskans can contribute effectively.

MR. O'HARE informed the committee that the website, www.ready.alaska.gov, includes contact information with regard to the response to Japan specifically. He echoed Major General Katkus' comments regarding that it's best to coordinate with the appropriate federal agencies that are responding to Japan's requests, which is the State Department and USAID. Currently, transportation is being supplied through the National Guard.

9:20:43 AM

CHAIR MUNOZ noted that the Salvation Army, www.donate.salvationarmy.org, and the Red Cross are actively involved.

9:21:46 AM

TOM MATTICE, Emergency Programs Coordinator & Avalanche Forecaster, City & Borough of Juneau, highlighted the coordination efforts he has done as he works toward emergency preparedness and response. He related that he does a lot of networking, outreach, and training at all levels throughout Southeast Alaska. Therefore, Mr. Mattice does a lot of local planning, training, and exercises as well as performs a lot of grant management for Juneau. One of the grants he manages is the Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) Grant, which is a mass casualty, mass prophylaxis med (indisc.) that's designed for all of Southeast Alaska. There is a steering committee comprised of members from throughout Southeast Alaska that work as a group to plan, train, exercise, and understand the gaps in the region. The goal is to work together as a region to facilitate supporting and filling in the gaps. To that end, teams are built to support other communities as well as to build assets to support Southeast communities and elsewhere in the state. The MMRS grant is unique. He informed the committee that he works a lot with DHSS, DHS&EM, and the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, including staff at the airport, ferries, cruise lines, hospitals, fire chiefs, law enforcement, and regional hazardous materials teams. Through the MMRS steering committee, six mobile disaster shelters have

been mobilized that can be joined to form one disaster shelter to be as large as a 90-bed mobile hospital. Each of those six mobile disaster shelters, located throughout Southeast Alaska, has about \$80,000 worth of emergency management service (EMS) equipment. Mr. Mattice highlighted that at Prince of Wales Island next month there will be a mobilization exercise in which seven communities will come together to form a three-shelter mobile hospital to support a mass casualty for Craig. The exercise will be held at the Klawock Airport so that if National Guard assets had to be mobilized for forward movement of patients it could be achieved. There will also be an annual steering committee meeting to review how to utilize the funds in conjunction with an annual exercise to support mass casualty as a region. The lessons learned from the aforementioned exercise will be incorporated into next year's grant spending plan while also identifying gaps that need to be addressed to support Juneau as well as all of Southeast Alaska.

[9:25:36 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA inquired as to how transportation issues are addressed on Prince of Wales Island as well as other parts of Southeast, particularly those areas that are comprised of multiple islands.

MR. MATTICE clarified that the Prince of Wales Island drill will also include mobilization structures from Ketchikan and Wrangell. The MMRS steering committee has reviewed how assets can be mobilized, which has resulted in working with the National Guard regarding how to load these structures in aircraft and rapidly deploy them. The committee has also [considered/reviewed] working with the ferry system, barge systems, and smaller providers. All of the aforementioned illustrates the multi-agency coordination of planning, training, and exercising so that all the organizations are familiar with working with and communicating with one another.

[9:27:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked if schools are involved in the emergency preparedness.

MR. MATTICE replied yes. In fact, part of the outreach effort for Prince of Wales Island included first-aid and CPR classes as well as emergency trauma classes in the schools. One of the goals with the MMRS is to create responders at all levels, including children.

[9:27:50 AM](#)

MR. MATTICE, continuing his presentation, reiterated that there is much focus of the planning, training, and exercises. Any lessons learned are incorporated into the grant spending in order to complete the preparedness loop. The aforementioned is done annually. He noted that his review of the All Hazards Mitigation Plan provided a greater understanding of the concerns that impact the City & Borough of Juneau as well as the priorities to address and mitigate those concerns and find sources of funding. Through the review of the aforementioned plan, Mr. Mattice said that he recognized the City & Borough of Juneau's Emergency Operations Plan had some holes. Therefore, the City & Borough of Juneau's Emergency Operations Plan is being revised. Through the planning section of DHS&EM in partnership with the city a review was performed of the Emergency Operations Plans of Ketchikan, Sitka, and Juneau in conjunction with all the hospitals in Southeast Alaska in order to ensure alignment in terms of referring to the appropriate state agencies for the appropriate support and mechanisms. The City & Borough has now began to review its plan and added various necessary annexes, including transportation, local and out-of-town evacuation annexes as well as mass care, mass shelter, mass casualty, and mass fatality.

[9:29:21 AM](#)

CHAIR MUNOZ asked if Mr. Mattice is involved in the air quality issues.

MR. MATTICE replied no, but noted that he is paying attention to it. In fact, he noted that he had expressed concerns with regard to the data not being real-time data. In further response to Chair Munoz, Mr. Mattice confirmed that he is following the disaster in Japan and wrote a paper that was presented to the Juneau Assembly. In response to Representative Gardner, Mr. Mattice agreed to provide the aforementioned paper to the committee. With regard to a food storage plan in Juneau, Mr. Mattice stated that the City & Borough of Juneau doesn't have a formal plan to address its food supply. Obviously, with the review of transportation one of the goals is to ensure that food can continue to be brought into the community. However, he acknowledged that it's a weakness.

[9:31:02 AM](#)

MR. MATTICE, completing his presentation, emphasized that critical to planning is the buy-in as is multi-agency coordination to review the assets necessary at critical times. He noted that he coordinates with various volunteer organizations to staff emergency shelters. He characterized his position as the hub of the many organizations that ensures all the lines of communication remain open. Volunteer organizations active in disaster are a large part of those with who he is in contact. Training is performed throughout the City & Borough of Juneau as well as throughout Southeast Alaska. This training ranges from training for those emergency responders to the local citizens. He also reviews how to utilize funds to address gaps in services and equipment. In fact, oxygen generation systems have been deployed in multiple Southeast Alaska communities in order to avoid dependency on the barges during a crisis. Furthermore, two level A hazardous materials teams have been built in Ketchikan and Juneau to be able to deploy and support smaller communities in Southeast Alaska. Mass casualty patient tracking systems have been provided to the large communities and hospitals in Southeast Alaska in order to review how to provide forward movement of patients. Also, Southeast communities continue to exercise with one another. He noted that most of the exercises he coordinates are geared toward the mass casualty, multi-agency coordination with unified command structures. Pandemic mass medication exercises are another large component of what Mr. Mattice does should the strategic national stockpiles need to be implemented. In conclusion, Mr. Mattice said that through multi-agency coordination, planning, training, exercising, revisiting necessary assets, and incorporating lessons learned into future planning, focused efforts are being made to improve emergency preparedness in Juneau and Southeast Alaska.

[9:34:48 AM](#)

MR. MATTICE, in response to Representative Gardner, related his assumption that similar efforts are being made in Anchorage. Those efforts, he opined, likely delve into more detail as the Anchorage team has more staff.

[9:35:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER thanked all the presenters for providing reassurance regarding emergency preparedness. He asked if there is a global gold standard for emergency preparedness.

MR. MATTICE said that he didn't know how to answer that, but opined that he's trying to create such constantly. Southeast Alaska presents unique challenges in terms of the distance between communities, difficult access, and limited lines of support.

[9:36:12 AM](#)

CHAIR MUNOZ thanked the presenters. She then noted that Representative Cissna will provide committee members with the Legislative Health Caucus' publication on Alaska well being, which includes a chapter on disaster preparedness.

[9:36:35 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:36 a.m.