

Flood warning issued

by Holly F. Reimer

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The Alaska Division of Emergency Services has announced a flood warning to residents along the Yukon, Kobuk and Kuskokwim river systems.

The agency announced an immediate flood warning for Fort Yukon. But officials still suggest that residents in other low-lying areas near these river systems

secure or move belongings to higher ground.

Erv Martin, director of DES, said that Circle, a village off the Yukon River in Northeastern Alaska, has already flooded.

"Usually when breakup starts — if there's no problems in Circle or Fort Yukon — it looks pretty good. But it's a bad indication when it starts flooding this early," Martin said.

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In Circle, the church and clinic were pushed off of their foundations. Martin said that's how bad it is.

He said this year breakup is early and this makes flooding more likely.

Circle residents have already moved back to their village, and they have started to assess the level of damage.

"What I've done is put out aerial monitoring teams to watch the rivers. If there is a threat, the teams go in and warn the villagers.

"Then we send disaster teams in to help the people, if in fact there is a threat," Martin explained.

He said that most residents from Fort Yukon have already moved in with friends or relatives on higher ground. And he added that the Alaska National Guard has been alerted and is ready to evacuate people.

"We just want to put out a warning to villages along these these rivers, because the way it's shaping up it doesn't look good," he said.