

Flooding potential high on Kuskokwim

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Every spring, people prepare for the flood season. Snow melt and ice jams force water over riverbanks and into the streets of villages making life both difficult and dangerous.

Already, the Alaska Army National Guard evacuated 15 Old Aniak residents from their homes on the Kuskokwim River, May 1, via a UH-1 helicopter based in Bethel. They were moved to New Aniak which is on an oxbow island in the river and is on higher ground than the adjacent

mainland south of the river. All are safe.

Here is the latest report prior to our press deadline.

Flood warnings were issued for Bethel, Kwethluk, Akiachak, Oscharville and Napaskiak on the Kuskokwim River. Flood watches have been issued for Napakiak on the Kuskokwim River and for Buckland on the Buckland River.

Chena, Salcha & Tanana Rivers

Breakup is nearly complete on the Tanana River, but ice and debris floating in the river makes boat travel hazardous. Tributaries along the Tanana

are open and water levels are high, but are dropping due to cooler temperatures.

Southcentral Alaska

Breakup in this area is nearly complete, but many lakes still have ice cover. Water levels are rising due to warm weather, causing more debris to be lifted into the moving water making travel by water hazardous.

Kuskokwim River

Flood warnings and watches have been delivered up and down the Kuskokwim River. Water levels are very high. At McGrath, levels are just

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Prepare Yourself for Flood Season

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below bank-full as a result of snow-melt caused by recent warm temperatures, but are dropping with cooler temperatures. Extreme high water levels caused some flooding at Akiachak, Kwethluk, Bethel, Oscarville and Napaskiak, with flooding still likely in Napaskiak. An ice jam was located downstream from Napaskiak. Breakup is expected to be concluded by the end of the week.

The sewage lagoon in Oscarville is flooded, water is on the streets and boardwalk, and two-three residences appear to have water in them. The runway in Napaskiak is still usable, while the sewage lagoon and roads are

flooded. Residents in Napaskiak are using boats to move about.

The Bethel Flood Gauge is 2 feet above flood stage and slowly rising. One fuel drum was reported to have drifted loose, and low-lying areas in Bethel are flooded.

Twenty percent of the runway in Akiak had been covered by the flood and the sewage lagoon and dump were inundated. The runway in Kwethluk was about 66 percent covered with water and vehicles appeared to have water in them. Streets were covered with water.

Bethel may suffer a flash flood if the ice jam breaks and a flood warning has been issued.

Yukon River

Ice continues to run on the Yukon River as breakup is nearing completion. The focus of breakup has shifted to the Galena area where the break front passed Kaltag last Saturday. Minor flooding occurred in Koyukuk and water rose to high levels at Nulato, and have since receded. Ice movement was reported Sunday at both Holy Cross and Marshall. Ice remains intact further downriver, but continues to deteriorate.

Koyukuk and Kobuk Rivers

Breakup activity continues in the Koyukuk River Basin. An ice jam was reported just upstream of Huslia last Saturday. Ice at the mouth of the Koyukuk River has moved to the Yukon River and the channel is open. Water levels remain low and breakup continues at a slow rate. An ice jam near Kobuk has released and ice was reported moving at Shungnak, causing levels to decrease at Kobuk. Ambler ice has started to move downstream at a slow pace. Ice cracked at Kiana last Sunday afternoon, but has not begun to move.

Up to date flood information is available through an Alaska Emergency Management Computer Bulletin Board at 800-478-9531.

15 evacuated from Old Aniak

To date, 15 people have been evacuated because of flooding. An Alaska Army National Guard UH-1 "Huey" helicopter crew, based at Bethel, relocated a total of 15 people from the area of Old Aniak on the Kuskokwim River to higher ground at the new town site May 1.

The National Weather Service has published a flood warning for Aniak and a flood watch for Upper and Lower Kalskag.

Flood checklists should include:

- Caring for neighbor's property when neighbors are unable to, but only with permission and prior coordination.
- Location of fuel shut-off valves and how to operate them should be shown to family members.
- Important documents should be placed in boxes that can be moved to upper levels or removed to safe locations.
- Children should be told of the danger of playing near flooding culverts and drainage ditches.

The weather conditions during the next few weeks, such as late snowfall or abnormal warming or cooling, can significantly alter the flood potential outlook. The probability of flooding in Southcentral Alaska continues to drop as the warm days and cool nights persist, bleeding off the snowpack.

Up-to-the-minute information

Listen for current information on flooding on radio and TV. Have extra batteries handy. You can monitor your CB or VHF radio for additional reports.

Up to date flood information is also available through an Alaska Emergency Management Computer Bulletin Board. Computer users with modems and communications software may access the board through an 800 number or an Anchorage number. The BBS is available 24 hours a day and features National Weather Service reports, flood situation reports as they become available, bulletins, and other information on emergency procedures. The menu-driven BBS is available at 1-800-478-9531 or in the Anchorage area at 428-7027.



Before the Flood

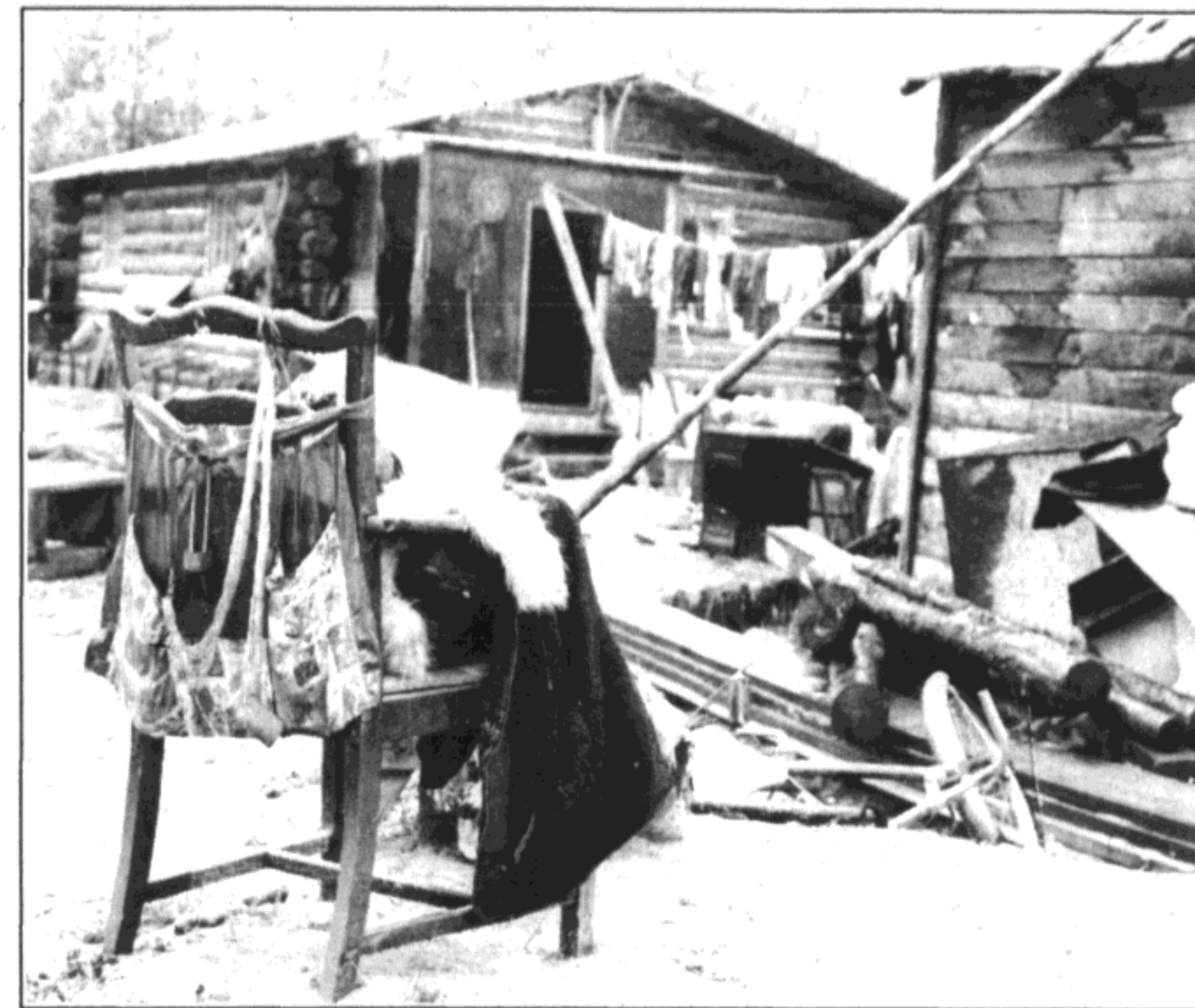
- Learn the safest route from your home to high, safe ground, if you should have to evacuate in a hurry.
- Keep a portable radio, emergency cooking equipment, flashlights and extra batteries in working order.
- Stockpile food and water.
- Know where your community shelter is.
- Persons who live in frequently flooded areas should keep on hand materials such as sandbags, plywood, plastic sheeting and lumber, which can be used to protect property.
- Remember: sandbags should not be stacked directly against the outer walls of a building, since, when wet, the bags may create added pressure on the foundation.
- Keep insurance policies, lists of personal property, and other important paperwork in a safe place, such as a safety deposit box.
- Consider buying flood insurance. Contact your city office or insurance agent to find out if it is offered to your community.

Flood potential status

The potential for spring breakup flooding from snowmelt and ice jams remains moderate along most rivers in Interior Alaska that are susceptible to this type of flooding, according to the National Weather Service in Anchorage. This includes the Chena, Tanana, Yukon, Koyukuk and Kobuk rivers.

The potential along the Kuskokwim River is considered to be high because of the deep snowpack in the Kuskokwim River Basin. Rivers in other areas of Alaska have a low to moderate flood potential.

Location	Breakup Date	Flood Potential
Kuskokwim River - McGrath To Stony River	Complete	High
Kuskokwim River - Sleetmute To Bethel	Ongoing	High
Yukon River - Eagle To Rampart	Ongoing	Moderate
Yukon River - Tanana To Galena	Ongoing	Moderate
Yukon River - Nulato To Russian Mission	Ongoing	Moderate
Yukon River - Marshall To Alakanuk	8 May-20 May	Moderate
Koyukuk River - Bettles To Hughes	Complete	Moderate
Koyukuk River - Hughes To Koyukuk	Ongoing	Moderate
Seward Peninsula Streams	10 May-18 May	Moderate
Kobuk River	Ongoing	Moderate
Noatak River	12 May-18 May	Moderate
Brooks Range - South Slope Drainages	Ongoing	Moderate
Brooks Range - North Slope Drainages	Ongoing	Moderate
Arctic Coastal Drainages	14 May-26 May	Moderate



When the flood comes

- Keep a battery-powered radio tuned to a local station and follow all emergency instructions.
- If you're caught in the house by suddenly rising waters, move to the second floor and, if necessary, to the roof. Take warm clothing, a flashlight and portable radio with you. Then wait for help...don't try to swim to safety. Rescue teams will be looking for you.
- When outside the house, remember...floods are deceptive. Try to avoid flooded areas and don't attempt to walk through floodwaters that are more than knee deep.
- A car is not necessarily a safe evacuation tool. Rapidly rising floodwaters can trap occupants in a car and sweep them away. Many deaths have resulted from attempts to drive cars through seemingly shallow floodwaters which can cause the vehicle to stall.

IF, AND ONLY IF, TIME PERMITS:

- Take measures to protect homes and personal property. Locate problem areas and move property to high ground if necessary (snow machines, chain saws, ATV's, fishing gear, etc.).
- Turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve if evacuation appears necessary. Do not touch electrical equipment unless it is in a dry area and you are standing on a piece of dry wood while wearing rubber gloves and rubber-soled boots or shoes.
- Monitor septic systems, wells and fuel tanks. Make sure valves are shut so tanks won't spill if flood waters move them.
- Fill bathtubs, sinks and jugs with clean water in case regular supplies are contaminated. You can sanitize these items by first rinsing them with bleach.

Be ready to be isolated for several days if your airport floods.

Also, electricity will be shut down if the power plant floods.

Be prepared to do without electricity.

After the Flood

- Prior to entering a building, check for structural damage. Make sure it is not in danger of collapsing. Turn off any outside gas lines at the meter or tank, and let the house air out for several minutes to remove foul odors or escaping gas.
- Upon entering the building, do not use open flame as a source of light since gas may still be trapped inside. Use a battery-operated flashlight instead.
- Watch for electrical shorts or live wires before making certain that the main power switch is off. Do not turn on any lights or appliances until the system has been checked for short circuits, preferably by an electrician.
- Cover broken windows and holes in the roof or walls to prevent further weather damage.
- Proceed with immediate cleanup measures to prevent any health hazards. Perishable items which pose a health problem should be listed and photographed before discarding. Throw out fresh food and previously opened medicines that have come into contact with floodwaters.
- Water for drinking and food preparation should be boiled vigorously for 10 minutes (until the public water has been declared safe).
- Shovel out mud while it is still moist to give the walls and floors a chance to dry. Once plastered walls have dried, brush off loose dirt. Wash with a mild soap solution and

rinse with clean water, always start at the bottom and work up. Ceilings are done last.

- Special attention in the early stages should be paid to cleaning out heating and plumbing systems.
- Flooded basements should be drained and cleaned as soon as possible. However, structural damage can result from pumping out the water too quickly. After the floodwaters around the property have subsided, begin draining the basement in stages, about 1/3 of the water volume each day.
- Take wooden furniture outdoors to dry. Carefully remove drawers and other moving parts. Remove the backing from dressers and push the drawers out from the back.
- Refrigerators, sofas, and other hard goods should be hosed off and kept for inspection by insurance adjusters. Items should be dried and aired. Take pictures of any damage. Deodorize using one teaspoon of baking soda per quart of water.
- Clean metal using kerosene-soaked cloth. Apply a light coat of oil to prevent iron from rusting. Scour utensils, and, if necessary, use fine steel wool on unpolished surfaces.

Community Action Checklist

- Meet with officials of the city, school, utilities, and clinic to review flood preparations.
- Conduct a publicity campaign to remind people to protect property that might be damaged by flooding and inform that of what to do in case of flooding.
- Conduct a pre-breakup inspection of flood prone areas.
- Make sure all important city records are protected from flooding.
- Prepare public buildings for possible flooding.
- Move all city vehicles and equipment to high ground storage areas.
- Check shop area and work sites to make sure city materials and property are safe from flooding.
- Shut down power plant if it is threatened with flooding. Remove batteries.
- Protect the fuel source and shut off valves to prevent spills if lines break.
- Anchor fuel tanks to prevent them from floating away in flood waters.
- Make sure valves are shut off to prevent fuel spills if lines break or tanks move.
- Move fuel in barrels and other containers to high ground.
- Monitor airport during high water. Report conditions to DOT/PF.
- Move all aircraft to high ground.
- Test water after flooding.
- If sewage lagoon overflows, contact State DEC.
- Make sure all culverts and drainage ditches in your community are open and clear of debris.
- Charge the batteries that provide backup power to telephone system.
- Notify school manager of possible need to use school as an emergency shelter. Make sure of access.
- If the school has its own or a backup generator, test it.
- Make a list of critical things that have to be done during flooding. Assign someone to each job.
- Prepare to provide shelter and food for people whose homes are flooded.
- Help people move to shelters. Monitor especially the status of elderly and handicapped people.
- Report on flood conditions to the Alaska Division of Emergency Services, 1-800-478-2337 or 1-907-428-7000.

**And most important of all,
be safe ~ there are people
who care about you!**