

'Floodfight' Meet Surveys Resources

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Close to 300 representatives of federal, State and local Fairbanks agencies gathered in Alaskaland Civic Auditorium yesterday to survey their resources in the event of a major flood.

"This meeting marks a landmark in disaster preparedness activities," said Darrell M. Trent, Deputy Director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness.

Mr. Trent, who moved into the spot vacated by Fred Russell when Russell became Assistant Secretary of the Interior was part of the White House staff concerned with the drafting of Emergency Disaster measure of 1970.

"This is the first time the Office of Emergency Preparedness is the guest of local and state governments. 'Operation Floodfight' is particularly important," he told the group in

(Continued on page 6)

Floodfight Conference..

(Continued from page 1)

his opening remarks.

Mr. Trent surveyed the operation of recent Federal emergency legislation during disasters within the past months.

The various representatives were welcomed to the meeting by Fairbanks Mayor Julian C. Rice.

Lt. Governor H.A. Boucher, former mayor of Fairbanks, represented the Governor's office at the meeting.

"We stand ready to assist you in carrying out what must be primarily the city of Fairbanks' responsibility."

Later in the meeting, Mr. Boucher expressed his pleasure at the degree of interaction between various agencies. Such interaction, he said, can stand the city in good stead in many situations, but it takes the threat of a flood to bring them together. Boucher was Mayor of Fairbanks during the disastrous flood of 1967.

The initial part of the floodfight meeting was devoted to National Weather Service, Soil Conservation Service and Geological Survey reports on the amount of snow in the area and the statistical probabilities of a runoff of flood proportions.

According to Glen Osgood of the National Weather Service, snow runoff this spring, without added precipitation (rainfall), could raise the Chena River water level to between $11\frac{1}{2}$ and $12\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Flood level is 12 feet. The months of April and May are months of low rainfall, but additional water could easily push the water level above crest level—as high as 17 feet.

Most of the breakup floods in the Tanana Valley during the past 60 years have been due to ice jams. In 1936 and 1937, breakup floods struck both the Yukon and Tanana Valleys, flooding the towns of Ft. Yukon, Nenana, McGrath, Tanana, Ruby,

etc.

In the event of a flood, the University of Alaska, with its "high ground and warm buildings" according to UA controller Al George, will serve as a major disaster evacuation center. Approximately 8,000 people were housed there during the 1967 flood, according to University Food Services figures.

According to Mr. George, sleeping facilities can be stretched several fold above the available 1200 beds. Electricity and utilities should hold up. Water will be a problem and severe water rationing will be a necessity in case of a flood.

Today (Wednesday) most of the agencies involved in flood preparation will participate in a flood exercise to examine the workability of current disaster transportation and communication plans. The Command Post Exercise will be held at the Fairbanks International Airport Building and will include local, state and federal government agencies.

Speakers at the "Floodfight" meeting were unanimous in expressing their hopes that their preparedness would not be needed. However, all recognized the importance of learning the resources of various agencies who will be involved in disaster relief.