

New Type of Snow Gauge May Accurately Predict Floods, Etc.

JUNEAU — A new type of snow gauge, which may accurately predict snow slides, avalanches, and floods, will be tested in Alaska this winter under a joint state-Atomic Energy Commission scientific project announced by Governor William A. Egan.

The governor said the new

gauge — which is called an isotopic snow gauge — is being installed at Mt. Alyeska near Anchorage and has "great potential" for serving as a type of early warning system for natural disasters.

"The list of possible uses for the isotopic snow gauge in Alaska is endless. If this new instrument proves successful, we could use it to monitor flood-prone areas — such as the Chena,

Yukon and Kuskokwim River watersheds — and forewarn residents of those areas of looming floods," Governor Egan said.

He said its function in predicting snow slides would be of "extreme importance to certain Alaska cities which are ringed by steep mountains that could produce damaging avalanches."

The ability to predict floods and avalanches would also have "direct application for projects

which require effective environmental safeguards," Governor Egan said.

The governor said the isotopic snow gauge is capable of automatically measuring several important factors, such as water content of the snow pack, total snow depth and snow density through the pack.

The Atomic Energy Commission provided funds to build the isotopic snow gauge.