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Emergency Managers Take Delivery of Portable Water Purifiers

Suitcase-Size Units Can be Deployed in Hours to Remote Communities and are Part of Broader Preparedness Plan

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KTUU/Catherine Steward

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — State emergency managers just took delivery of some pretty sophisticated equipment which the Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management can deploy during the next disaster.

The highly-portable, suitcase-sized water purifiers can be loaded onto a small aircraft, packed into a vehicle trunk, towed behind a snow machine, or strapped to an ATV.

“You hook up the hoses, put it in the water, push a button and you’ve got water,” said Karl Edwards, emergency management specialist, while demonstrating one of the machines at Campbell Creek in Anchorage.

The units, which cost \$13,900 each, were delivered in late February and early March. This is the first spring breakup during which Alaska emergency managers have the option of using their own portable purifiers.

“Weather permitting we can be out within the next day,” said Edwards.

Often, when a river floods a town during spring river breakup, municipal water becomes unsafe to drink and residents must rely on boiled or bottled water.

According to John Madden, director of the Division of Homeland Security, the new portable units are “a bridge between when the event happens and when we can get the supply line going.”

A larger trailer unit the state recently purchased can service communities along the road system. It can bottle water and bag it in durable plastic bladders.

The water purifiers are part of a broader expansion of state emergency supplies.

A set of 30 portable electricity generators in all sizes are on order and should arrive in about four months.

Also, Gov. Sean Parnell recently secured money in the latest budget to purchase large quantities of non-perishable emergency food, which the state plans to stash in strategic locations.

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