



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

24 April 2013

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River Watch 2013 Prepares to Launch

Media Invited to Embed with River Watch Teams

Camp Denali, Alaska - Each spring the River Watch program, a partnership between Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM) and the National Weather Service (NWS), conducts aerial observations of rivers prone to ice jam flooding. The River Watch teams provide flood warnings and alerts, and assist communities responding to flood emergencies. The River Watch partnership has existed for over thirty years.

This year, space is available for Alaskan media outlets to embed with the River Watch teams during observation flights. One media seat is potentially available per flight and will be given on a first come, first served basis. The NWS anticipates break-up to begin the first week of May.

Media organizations that wish to fly with a River Watch team will need to provide lodging and transportation to and from base communities. The 2013 River Watch base communities will be Circle Hot Springs, Galena, St Mary's, Aniak, and Bethel.

"Residents all along our river systems understand that breakup can be a dangerous time, but they look forward to the arrival of open water," said John Madden, Director of the DHS&EM. "The River Watch teams monitor river conditions and provide timely alerts. This gives residents the opportunity to protect themselves, their homes and their communities."

The State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) will activate to monitor and support River Watch activities. If flooding becomes imminent, the SEOC will be able to quickly coordinate the state's response effort.

The River Watch teams' schedule will be determined by river conditions and community needs. Media who wish to embed with River Watch will travel on the River Watch team schedule, which may include unexpected trips to communities that are experiencing flooding. Embedded media may be required to spend short periods in villages to allow community leaders the chance to inspect river conditions.

To request a seat on a River Watch flight please contact the DHS&EM Public Information Officer, Jeremy Zidek, as soon as possible at (907) 428-7077 or Jeremy.Zidek@alaska.gov.

More information can be found on the DHS&EM website at www.ready.alaska.gov.

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