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DHS&EM to deploy personnel to conduct post-earthquake preliminary damage assessment

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Alaska’s Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM) will deploy a team to conduct a damage assessment in communities impacted by the July 28 Chignik Earthquake.

The team will depart as soon as weather, COVID testing requirements, and aircraft availability allow. The team will visit several impacted communities. DHS&EM will send a team of emergency management specialists to the most severely affected communities.

At 10:16 p.m. on July 28, the National Tsunami Warning Center in Palmer, Alaska recorded a magnitude (M)8.2 earthquake 60 miles south of Chignik. The magnitude and location of the earthquake triggered a tsunami warning for an approximately 600-mile-long coastline from Nikolski to the Kenai Peninsula. Based upon the warning, multiple communities within the warning area evacuated to higher ground.

“This was the largest earthquake Alaska has experienced in more than 50 years. We Alaskans are extremely fortunate a large tsunami wave was not generated, and that no one was severely injured by the shaking,” said DHS&EM Director Bryan Fisher. “While we cannot predict earthquakes or tsunamis, we can have plans in place to react to these events. Throughout the tsunami warning and advisory area communities responded and quickly evacuated their residents. Our alert system worked, and people were able to get to safety before the estimated wave arrival time.

The USGS Shake Map produced for the earthquake showed the highest seismic shaking intensities in Cold Bay, Sand Point, Perryville and Chignik areas of the Alaska Peninsula. The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) conducted a full communication check with all communities in the warned areas within one hour of the tsunami warning.

The SEOC is in contact with State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, the Lake and Peninsula Borough, the Aleutians East Borough, and several other communities to assess earthquake damage, including residential and public facility damages. The SEOC received reports of minor damages to mostly residential or recreational structures in a few communities, but a complete assessment is ongoing.

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