

Subcommittee on Emergency Management, Intergovernmental Relations, and the District of Columbia Friday, April 4  
South Anchorage High School  
13400 Elmore Rd,  
Anchorage, Alaska.

Testimony: George Raymond Keeney

“The Role of First Responders in Catastrophic Disaster Planning”

As the Fire Chief and Emergency Manager for the City of Valdez my goal is to prepare our community to respond to any disaster, natural or manmade.

Our community has and will respond to disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, oil spills, volcanic fall out, wind storms and avalanches. Each time our local agencies have worked together to respond to and recover from the catastrophic events. Alongside the local agencies we have relied on our state and federal partners to assist in our response and recovery.

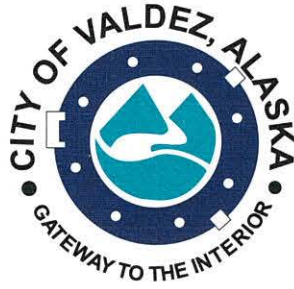
When responding to any event it is best to know your capabilities and the capabilities of the agencies you work with, both locally and state wide. During the past fourteen years in Valdez I have responded to emergencies that involved local, state and federal assets. Having an ongoing working relationship with the state has made it easy to request and utilize their resources.

The Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (ADHS&EM) provides training, public education and exercises that help prepare communities to respond and recover from emergencies. The division has a staff of professionals that assist with most every request that I have asked of them.

The ADHS&EM is able to respond to most disasters in our state twenty four hours a day. The support they provide a community is nonstop. The ability for a community to call the State Emergency Operations Center at any time and get quick response is very valuable.

Our community recently needed to talk to a hydrologist when an avalanche came down and blocked the Lowe River and Richardson Highway; they quickly responded with a specialist via teleconference to provide a professional assessment. Throughout the two weeks of that event the State EOC conducted teleconferences for our incident management team (IMT) enabling them to speak to all agencies involved and to get answers to our questions. This allowed our IMT to respond to our residents and inform the public in a timely manner.

The Alaska Shield 2014 exercise has also just been completed and involved local, state and federal partners. This exercise allowed us to test our relationships with outside agencies in response to a natural disaster. We had over five hundred personnel that participated in this exercise which strengthened these relationships. With each of these multi - governmental agency exercises we learn more about what each agency can bring to the table in a crisis.



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With any emergency, it is always the responsibility of local government to take the lead in responding to their event. The state and federal government should be responsible to assist that local entity, if requested; but it is ultimately owned and managed by that local government. Therefore anything that can strengthen this understanding and the cooperative relationships between all agencies should really be encouraged.

Testimony:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George R. Keeney".

George R Keeney  
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