

Best practices

Disaster Mitigation Working in Alaska

FEMA



Alaska



Cordova & Valdez

Avalanche Zone Acquisition Program Protects Property and Saves Lives

Cordova and Valdez, Alaska — The winter of 1999-2000 brought severe winter storms and widespread damage to Gulf of Alaska and interior communities. Electrical power failures caused misery and snow avalanches cut off communities and destroyed homes and commercial structures. The storm killed two people.

On January 26, 2000, part of Cordova was hit by an avalanche that impacted Mile 5.5 of the Copper River Highway, twelve residences and a commercial warehouse. Estimated damages were \$2,223,962. Five of the homes were totally destroyed and one life was lost.

On February 7, 2000, an avalanche hit a Valdez house on Porcupine Road and left debris piled 2 1/2 stories high.

In the aftermath of this storm, local and State of Alaska officials identified areas that were likely to be subjected to future avalanche damage. They developed a plan for acquisition of properties that were most at risk, then applied for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding through the Hazard



The destructive power of an avalanche

Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP).

The mitigation projects were quickly approved, with the goal of creating a structure-free, non-occupied zone in the area of the catastrophic avalanche events.

In Cordova, twelve properties were acquired within the 5.5 Mile Loop Road Subdivision red zone. Five properties had standing structures that were relocated. The State provided 25% of the funding and the Federal share was 75% of \$738,920.

In Valdez, thirteen properties within the Porcupine Road red zone were acquired and several buildings were relocated. The total mitigation investment in Valdez was \$1,165,202.

A national study sponsored by the Congressional Budget Office found that past federally funded natural hazard mitigation projects have saved, on average, approximately \$4 for each dollar invested. Reducing or eliminating future damage saves money, helps communities and saves lives!

