



KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH
CITY OF KETCHIKAN



**Joint Media Release: Third Avenue Landslide Update 27:
One Month After Landslide | Recovery Continues**

Date: September 25, 2024, 6:00 p.m.
Contact: Kacie Paxton, Public Information Officer, 907-228-2383

For Immediate Release

In reflecting on the response to the August 25, 2024, Third Avenue Landslide, the Ketchikan Emergency Operations Center (EOC) staff extends heartfelt gratitude to the Community of Ketchikan, its first responders, businesses, contractors, City, Borough, State, and Federal agencies, members of the media, and every individual who reached out in some way to provide assistance. The recovery process has been a community effort, we are in this together, and we will get through this together.

Looking Back – The Emergency Response: Emergency personnel from all three island fire departments responded to the August 25 landslide. A total of 44 Fire and EMS personnel with 12 apparatus (response vehicles) arrived on the scene, and were staged on either side of the slide area. The response included 24 Ketchikan Fire Department personnel with 7 apparatus, 12 South Tongass Fire Department personnel with 3 apparatus, and 8 North Tongass Fire Department personnel with 2 apparatus. While on scene, the first priority of emergency responders was to assist with evacuation and treatment of victims of the landslide.

A Devastating Loss: The loss of Sean Griffin to the landslide was tragic news. Sean was a beloved husband, father, son, neighbor, and coworker. He spent his life serving his family and his community, and was a valued member of the City of Ketchikan Public Works team for seventeen years. Sean and coworker Chris Riley were clearing stormwater drains when their vehicle was caught in the landslide on the Third Avenue Bypass. Sean is remembered for his dedication, positive spirit, and unwavering devotion to his family, his friends, and to the community. He continues to be thought of and missed on a daily basis.

Miraculous Rescues: Based on a report from a citizen who witnessed the landslide, emergency responders were able to quickly get to the vehicle that had been carried in the debris. Fire and EMS personnel used new battery-operated tools and equipment to rescue Chris Riley from the vehicle. Chris was taken to the Ketchikan Medical Center where he spent seven days in intensive care, and another four in general care. Now home and recovering, he continues to improve daily and is thankful for the care and support he has received.

Three houses were pushed down the hill by the landslide debris. Two of the houses were vacant during the slide, but James and Bill Montiver were home at the time. Their house was pushed 47 feet downhill into the neighbor's home. James was able to make it out and notified responders that Bill was still trapped inside. Emergency personnel used their training and new equipment to rescue Bill from the home. Unfortunately the Montivers' dogs Alani and Cassie were believed to be lost.

Seven days after the landslide, another miraculous rescue occurred, this time for the Montivers' pets. Early the morning of September 1, an AkDoT&PF geologist heard whimpering from the Montiver home while assessing the area of the landslide. Emergency responders were sent to the scene, and after careful evaluation of the home for stability, were able to enter the home and rescue Alani and Cassie, and return them to Bill and James. Even though the Montivers lost their home, they were thankful to have their family back together again.

Loss of Homes and Evacuations: Three homes were completely destroyed by the landslide, with damage to other homes. At the time of the landslide around 60 households were evacuated in the area, and an emergency shelter was established at the Ketchikan High School. As areas were cleared of landslide danger and as power was restored, families were able to return to their homes.

Evacuation and Emergency Shelter: The School District Superintendent set up the emergency shelter at the Ketchikan High School with a team of approximately 70 volunteers and donors, including individuals, businesses, and restaurants. Ten families used the services provided at Kayhi, which included lodging, laundry and showers, gymnasium, and internet services. District staff provided overnight support, and a 24 hour call center was established, as well as an onsite nurse and social worker. The community response to the request for food and household supplies was impressive. The emergency shelter averaged 70 meals a day for families, responders, and EOC personnel.

Debris Removal and House Demolition: Contractors were onsite the evening of the landslide to assist with flooding, debris cleanup, and traffic control. During the first week, contractors worked to clear debris from Third Avenue, Second Avenue, Whitecliff Avenue, and built an access road on Third Avenue West to reach the debris field. In addition to the Borough and City Public Works Crews, eight contractors provided recovery assistance. Two businesses provided land to be used for waste disposal sites. The second week of recovery included the demolition of the three houses, and hydroseeding on the slopes above and below Third Avenue. Debris removal and repair of the Third Avenue Bypass continued during the third and fourth weeks. Slide recovery operations to date included the use of 13 excavators, one bulldozer, three loaders, nine dump trucks, two vactor trucks, and one crane.

Utility Repair: The work of the Ketchikan Public Utility teams was impressive with timely restoration of service. The electric and communications businesses were equally as impressive in their cooperative efforts to restore services to customers.

- 30 homes and two businesses lost and had power restored.
- 6 utility poles were replaced, 4 were repaired, with 2 awaiting replacement (slide area) with temporary services restored.
- Rebuilt communications arms on six power poles, fiber optic lines were replaced and rehung, and 45 fiber optic drops were conducted.
- Restored internet and/or voice connections on 31 residences and two businesses.

A Trained and Prepared EOC Team: The week prior to the landslide, Ketchikan area emergency operations center personnel participated in a multi-day training exercise utilizing the newly revised Greater Ketchikan Area Multi-Jurisdictional Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The training enabled members of the EOC to put into practice the skills needed for responding to an emergency. Little did we know those skills would be used three days later. It is that emergency training, in addition to annual training and drills, that enables Ketchikan to respond in an efficient manner to disasters. Ketchikan is fortunate to have trained professionals serving in key positions in emergency response. Participating members of the Ketchikan Landslide EOC included:

- City of Ketchikan, including Fire, EMS, and Police
- Ketchikan Gateway Borough, including South and North Tongass Fire
- Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District
- Ketchikan Public Utilities
- Alaska State Troopers
- Alaska Emergency Operations Center
- Alaska DNR/DGGS
- Alaska AkDOT&PF
- Alaska State Defense Force
- Alaska National Guard
- American Red Cross
- National Weather Service/NOAA
- Salvation Army
- SEAPRO
- US Coast Guard

Recovery Work Continues: Rock has been placed to bolster drainage areas above and below the Third Avenue Bypass. Contractors are rebuilding a retaining wall on Lower Second Avenue. Crews continue to work to install fencing and new sidewalk panels, curbs, and gutters on the bypass. Crews are on target for the bypass to be open by September 30, weather depending.

In the event of a substantial wind and rainstorm, the bypass will be closed with notifications sent out on Nixle and via media release. This will occur for the first few significant rain events this fall in order to observe the slope area above, below, and around the bypass. The bypass will be reopened as soon as possible when it is deemed safe.

Looking Forward:

The final report from Landslide Technologies is expected to be submitted to the City by September 30. The report will provide information on the cause of the landslide.

A team with members of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys, (DNR/DGGS), U.S. Geological Survey, and National Weather Service, will be travelling to Ketchikan on October 1st. The group will be visiting the landslide areas and will also meet with EOC members to discuss collaborative efforts and a plan for follow-up and future actions. A report of the findings of DGGS will be provided in upcoming months. Following that report, a community town hall event will be scheduled.

Thank You to Contractors, Volunteers, Donors, and Citizens: The outpouring of support to the families affected by the landslide has been remarkable. The hard work of the contractors and the care demonstrated during the response has been impressive. Donations provided by local businesses and citizens are appreciated beyond measure. The EOC commends every member of our community for coming together during this time of need.

EOC Objectives

The Ketchikan Emergency Operations Center Unified Command objectives are:

1. Complete necessary repairs/updates to open to 3rd Avenue to traffic by 9/30/2024.
2. Maintain the current downtown Main Street/Spruce Mill Way/ Bawden Street traffic plan until 10/04/2024.
3. Ensure the financial stability of the City of Ketchikan while managing the costs associated with the landslide response and recovery. Ongoing.
4. Provide landslide awareness and public outreach. Ongoing.

Road Closures in Effect:

- Second Ave from Austin St to Whitecliff Ave remains closed to through traffic.
- Third Ave from the Library to Washington Street remains closed. This area is expected to be closed through the end of September while safety measures are put in place.

Rainbird Trail remains CLOSED. All sections of the trail have been closed since August 25, 2024. Entering the Rainbird Trail is prohibited. Additional caution tape and signage was placed on the trail in the areas of the slide. Please respect this closure and do not attempt to access the trail.

Services for Families Affected by the Landslide:

Anyone who had disaster-related expenses to their primary residence because of the event on August 25, 2024, may complete the Individual Assistance application via <https://ready.alaska.gov/Recovery/IA> or calls 1-844-445-7131.

Information and Disaster-Related Resources available at www.kgbak.us/landslide

Ketchikan Weather Matrix for the landslide area:

https://www.weather.gov/source/ajk/ss/Ketchikan_Landslide.html

Daily weather updates, advisories, and warnings: <https://www.weather.gov/ajk/>

Family Emergency Preparedness Tools: Below are links to tools and resources for families to be prepared for a disaster:

- [Red Cross - Family Disaster Plan](#)
- [Red Cross - Landslide Safety Checklist](#)
- [ASDF Bug Out Bag Checklist](#)
- [Individual and Family Preparedness Guide](#)

A list of opportunities to support the families affected by the landslide, is available on the Borough Landslide page at: <https://www.kgbak.us/1099/Helping-Your-Neighbors>

To sign up for Nixle emergency alerts text “99901” to 888777 for updates.

#

The Ketchikan EOC would like to thank the following individuals and businesses for their donations during the response to the landslide. This list is not all-inclusive, and there are many more unnamed or unidentified individuals who donated and contributed so much.

- SEAPA Lunch for EOC and workers
- Annabelles,-lunches and extra food for EOC and workers, meals at the Kayhi Shelter
- Pizza Mill – pizzas for EOC
- Fish House – gift cards for EOC
- Salmon Falls – Food for the Kayhi Shelter
- Eagle’s Nest – Food for the Kayhi Shelter
- La Patron – Food for the Kayhi Shelter
- The Landing- food for the Kayhi Shelter
- Chamber of Commerce – Sandwiches and pie for EOC and workers
- New York Café – lunch for geologists and DOT workers, sandwiches for workers
- First City Electric- meals for the EOC
- Fat Stan’s – pizza for the EOC
- McDonalds – Food for the Kayhi Shelter
- Safeway – Food for the Kayhi Shelter
- A&P Food for the Kayhi Shelter
- 3 Bears Food for the Kayhi Shelter
- Outpost Agriculture – greens for Kayhi Shelter
- Walmart – personal supplies for evacuees
- Cindy and Tom Craig – Warm cookies for EOC and workers
- Patsy Finney – cookies for Construction workers
- Lighthouse Church of God – cookies for construction crew
- Rainy Day Quilters-Cookies for the construction workers
- Kristie Charrier – food for EOC
- Glenn Brown – lunch, coffee, cookies for EOC
- Ketchikan Radio – coffee, Gift Cards
- Island Vet Clinic – medical care and special food for Montiver dogs
- The Landing – Boardroom space for Canine Crisis Dog Team meet and greet
- Cape Fox Boardroom for Red Cross to provide assistance to victims
- Denise Wolvin – petsitting for evacuee pets
- Tongass Trading Womens and Menswear – new apparel for evacuees who lost homes
- Michael Robbins and school staff for setting up emergency shelter, making breakfast, lunches and dinners for evacuees, workers, and EOC staff, and for manning shelter 24/7.
- Many wonderful community members who volunteered their time in the Kayhi kitchen to make food for the community and EOC
- Ketchikan Ministerial Association for support and hosting the Community Gathering



Rock added to the base of the slope above the Third Avenue Bypass. Photo courtesy of City of Ketchikan.



New fence posts installed, and preparations for new sidewalk to be poured. Photo courtesy of City of Ketchikan.