

# Galena, AK 2014

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## UMVIM Response

### Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the travel dates?
  - a. FEMA and the State of Alaska are targeting a 100 day recovery effort beginning on or about June 1 through Sept 1.
  - b. Teams will fly to Fairbanks each Monday, fly to Galena on Tuesday, return to Fairbanks two weeks later on Tuesday and return home each Wednesday.
  - c. On site work will begin either Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning depending on flight schedules.
  - d. Each team will work for two consecutive weeks with a one week overlap of teams.
2. What are the travel arrangements?
  - a. FEMA will pay for round trip airfare from your nearest airport to Fairbanks and provide charter flights to Galena.
  - b. Team members will travel to Fairbanks on Monday, overnight at The First United Methodist Church (FUMC) in Fairbanks, and fly by charter aircraft to Galena on Tuesday. Two weeks later on Tuesday, the teams will return to Fairbanks by charter aircraft, overnight at FUMC, and return home on Wednesday.
  - c. You will receive a safety briefing and a cultural overview prior to leaving Fairbanks.
  - d. Travel instructions will be provided approximately one week prior to your departure to Fairbanks. Volunteers will make their own flight reservations through National Travel, FEMA's travel agent.
  - e. Travel to and from Fairbanks must be completed in one day. FEMA will not reimburse you for an overnight stay en-route.
  - f. You will be met at both the Fairbanks airport and the charter service for transportation to and from the FUMC regardless of your time of arrival or departure. A contact name and phone number will be provided before you depart.
3. How much luggage can I bring?
  - a. Each volunteer is limited 50 pounds of luggage. This includes **all** luggage, i.e. suitcases, backpacks, briefcases, sleeping bags etc.
  - b. You will be given an emergency backpack in Fairbanks that you will take to and from Galena. This does not count as part of your personal luggage allowance.
4. Will FEMA reimburse me for checking luggage?

- a. No, the volunteers will need to pay for checking their luggage.
5. Do I need any special clothing?
- a. We recommend a good pair of work shoes/boots, preferably with thick soles and steel toes. There are lots of sharp objects lying around that can penetrate the soles of your shoes. Tennis shoes are not recommended for work on site.
  - b. In early June, a pair of waterproof boots with thick soles is a good idea. It gets pretty muddy from the thawing and rain.
  - c. Long sleeve shirts are a must. The mosquitoes are plentiful and very hungry.
  - d. A good pair(s) of work gloves. Teams in 2013 also recommended a pair of thinner gloves such as Gorilla Grips for working on jobs that require more dexterity than you can get with thick leather gloves.
  - e. Clothing appropriate for the climate. Remember, you are in the central part of Alaska and it starts to cool off earlier than the lower 48. Check the weather for Galena before you pack.  
<http://www.weather.com/weather/today/USA0092:1>
  - f. Rain gear, including boots, is a good thing to consider, especially in early June and after the middle of September.
  - g. If you are allergic to mosquito bites, you might want to consider a "bug jacket". These are available at REI and other sporting goods stores. (The mosquitos are less of a problem in late August and early September when the weather turns cooler.)
  - h. A suggested packing list will be provided when you receive your registration packet.
6. Should I bring any of my own personal protective equipment?
- a. We suggest you bring your own safety glasses. Remember standard eyeglasses are not safety glasses.
  - b. The 2013 teams suggested you bring a pair of kneepads.
7. Do I need to bring any tools?
- a. No, FEMA will provide all the tools and equipment you will need to do the assigned tasks.
  - b. If you have your favorite tools, i.e. hammer, tape measure, Wonder Bar, tool belt, etc. feel free to bring them. Remember the 50 pound weight limit.
8. Do I need to bring any supplies?
- a. No, supplies will be present on site when you arrive to do the tasks assigned.
  - b. Having said that, experience has shown there are always last minute tools or supplies that are missing. In 2013 we used UMCOR funds and donations to purchase some of them. You can always make a donation to purchase supplies if you wish. You can do this by sending your check to the PNW Conference Treasurer's Office, 816 S 261th St #2, Des Moines, WA 98198. Put "2013 Yukon River Flooding" on the memo line. These funds will be used solely for the Yukon River flooding recovery.

9. Is there a cost to stay at the **FUMC**?
- No, they have chosen to provide overnight housing, meals and transportation for volunteer teams as a way to support the recovery effort.
  - If you would like to help them offset the cost of hosting teams, you can make a contribution to the church through your contact person in Fairbanks.
10. Where will we stay in **Galena**?
- A Responder Support Camp (RSC) has been constructed on the tarmac at the airport, which is on the old Galena Air Force Station.
  - The RSC has living/sleeping quarters, a chow hall, shower facilities and laundry capability. You can visit <http://alaskastructures.com/products/military/?id=64> to get an idea of what the facility looks like. The structures are arctic rated down to -20 degrees.
  - The tents are either 2 or 4 person, heated, have single bed sized cots with mattresses, pillows, sheets and blankets, carpeted, and have power available. Cell phone service is limited and internet is scheduled to be available by June. The 4 person tents are divided into 2 persons per cubicle.
  - The arrangement will consider male/female segregation and privacy concerns. Husband and wife teams will share a cubicle.
  - Towels and washcloths are available in the shower room.
  - There are washers and dryers in the shower facility. There is no cost for their use but be prepared to provide your own laundry products.
  - Most of the volunteers in the summer of 2013 took a sleeping bag. That is your choice. FEMA sleeping bags are also available if you do not wish to take your own. You can pick them up upon your arrival at FUMC. The sleeping bags are part of your 50 pound weight limit.
11. How will we be fed?
- Two hot meals and a sack lunch will be provided each day. All the teams that have been there say the food is plentiful and very good.
12. How long are we expected to stay?
- Each team member is expected to commit to working on site for two consecutive weeks. The logistics and expense of getting them there is too great for FEMA to accept any less of a commitment.
  - The teams do not work on Sunday. It is a day of worship and rest. There is only one active church in Galena, The Galena Bible Church. Volunteers are warmly welcomed at all of their activities.
13. Can I stay longer than two weeks?
- Possibly. The availability of housing is the deciding factor. If you wish to stay more than two weeks, we need to know that in

advance so we can work out the logistics. We will not be able to accommodate last minute requests.

14. Where will we be working?

- a. Teams will work in the village of Galena on the Yukon River, about 270 miles west of Fairbanks and 350 miles northwest of Anchorage. This village received the most damage.
- b. Galena is divided into Old Town, located right on the Yukon River, and New Town, located a few miles away on slightly higher ground.
- c. UMVIM teams will work only in New Town. Samaritan's Purse teams will work in Old Town.

15. What will we be doing?

- a. In most cases, teams will be rebuilding/repairing homes that have been "mucked out" by the homeowner or AmeriCorps volunteers or those that were not completed in the summer of 2013. At the current time (12/11/13) there are 14 additional homes that require repair ranging from minor to major. This includes tasks such as putting in insulation, hanging sheetrock, mudding and taping, installing doors and windows, hanging cabinets, repairing and/or replacing decks and entry steps, painting, some electrical and some plumbing. It's the same kind of tasks teams have done in Mississippi after Katrina or New Jersey after Sandy. It's just more isolated.
- b. We will also be asked to construct approximately 7 kit houses. There are three types of kit houses available ranging from a fairly simple frame structure to a very sophisticated Cold Climate structure. Instructions and some training will be available for the teams that do this work. We do not know at this time which structure the homeowner will choose.

16. What skills are needed?

- a. This deployment **requires** volunteers with construction/remodel skills/experience, some electrical and some plumbing. This is **not** a volunteer mission for someone who has little or no construction/remodel experience.
- b. We will forward a skills survey to all potential volunteers and we reserve the right to deny participation if we do not believe the volunteer has the proper skill level to support/contribute to the team.

17. Are there any age limits on team members?

- a. Team members must be at least 18 years of age.
- b. There is no upper limit as long as the team member is physically able to do the work assigned and tolerate the rustic environment.
- c. You may be asked to provide a letter from your doctor certifying you are physically fit to participate in this response.

18. What about power, water, sewer, etc.?

- a. Power: Some homes have power some do not. There are generators available for working on those homes that do not have power. The FEMA offices and the Responder Support Camp

(where the teams will be housed) are on the old Galena Air Force Station and they do have power. The RSC does have power to all facilities in the camp.

- b. Sewer: All of the facilities on the Air Force Station have sewer, none of the homes do. The homes all have either septic tanks or holding tanks. There are port-a-potties spread throughout the village. We suggest you bring hand sanitizer and wet wipes.
- c. Water: The facilities on the Air Force Station have running water but some of the homes do not. The city water system has been repaired but it services only a small part of the population. Most homes have holding tanks that are refilled by truck. Each volunteer is requested to bring one or two water bottles that can be filled from water kegs. The community is not able to recycle so they don't want to use plastic throwaway water bottles any more than absolutely necessary.

19. Will I have phone and Internet service?

- a. The FEMA facilities on the AF Station have landlines and can be used by volunteers. There is spotty cell phone service for ATT subscribers. **None** of the other cell carriers work. The preferred carrier is GCI, an Alaska based carrier. UMVIM will provide four GCI phones with unlimited voice and text for team use. Team members may use these phones for contact with their families.
- b. There are a few WiFi hot spots on the AF Station. The RSC is scheduled to have Internet by next spring. I am told there will be WiFi throughout the RSC.
- c. FEMA and the State of Alaska will provide two-way radios for each work team to insure adequate communication for safety, security and inter-team coordination between work sites.

20. What about transportation in Galena?

- a. Transportation is a constant problem in Galena. There were a limited number of vehicles in Galena before the flood and it got even worse after the flood. We are working with FEMA and the State of Alaska to ensure UMVIM teams have adequate transportation.

21. Are there any stores where I can buy things I forgot?

- a. There are two grocery stores in the village with a limited supply of items. They also tend to be expensive. Do your best to think of everything you will need and bring it with you.

22. Are there medical facilities available?

- a. Galena has a medical clinic staffed by a doctor and nurse. The clinic will be available to volunteers.
- b. In case of a medical emergency, Medevac services are available but it will take at least 40 minutes for the Medevac plane to reach the village and 40 minutes to return. Weather conditions may impact their ability to make the trip.

- c. Volunteers should ensure they take adequate supplies of any medications for the two weeks plus a cushion in case bad weather prevents their return on schedule.
  - d. Volunteers with a high-risk medical condition **should not consider** this deployment.
23. Do I need insurance?
- a. Yes, you must have your own medical insurance.
  - b. We are investigating supplemental insurance through one of the United Methodist Jurisdictions.
24. Who is my emergency contact at the work site?
- a. In Galena - TBD
  - b. In the lower 48 – Jim Truitt, 253-630-1268 (H), 253-797-1680 (C)
25. Will I be working with volunteers from other organizations?
- a. Possibly, this effort will require the best all of us have to offer if we are going to meet FEMA's goal of completing the recovery in 100 days.
  - b. Samaritan's Purse volunteers will be in Galena working on non-FEMA authorized homes. We will probably share the RSC with them.
  - c. Your work team will be composed of volunteers from other Methodist conferences from across the US.
26. Do I need to be part of a team to participate?
- a. You are welcome and encouraged to participate as a team but it is not required. We will recruit volunteers from across the US and form teams when the volunteers arrive in Fairbanks.
27. How large are the teams?
- a. In 2013 we were restricted to 10 members per team due to housing restrictions. FEMA and the State of Alaska are considering expanding the RSC to accommodate larger teams so we can complete the work. This will be ironed out in the next couple of months.
28. Will there be opportunities to interact with the local residents?
- a. Absolutely. The residents are warm friendly people. Approximately 70% are native American with native American customs.
  - b. Over the summer in 2013 there were several community gatherings and the UMVIM teams were always invited.
  - c. Some of the local fishermen took team members fishing or for boat rides on the Yukon.
  - d. Bonfires on the beach with locals were a favorite past time.
  - e. The homeowners were frequently present when the teams were working on their homes.
  - f. Please remember this is a subsistence society with few extras in their lives. Be considerate when accepting offers of food or gifts from them.
29. Do I have to be a United Methodist to participate?

- a. No, but you must conduct yourself according to the UMVIM beliefs, principles and safe sanctuary guidelines.
30. Will I need a background check?
- a. Yes, you will be asked to provide proof that you have had a national background check within the last two years. If you have not, we will ask your permission to run one through the Pacific Northwest Conference of the UMC.
31. Do I need any vaccinations?
- a. A current Tetanus shot is **mandatory**.
  - b. Hepatitis A & B are recommended but not mandatory.
32. How do I volunteer?
- a. Send an email to Jim Truitt, [umvimdisasterresponse@comcast.net](mailto:umvimdisasterresponse@comcast.net), and he will send you all the necessary registration information.
  - b. Contact Jim with any questions or suggestions you may have.