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Janklow Gives Emergency Light Systems To Fire Departments April 21, 2000

(Pierre) – Gov. Bill Janklow gave emergency lighting units to fire departments from across western South Dakota on Thursday. The units are powerful enough to light a disaster scene nearly the size of a football field.

"Whether it's fighting floods in Watertown, or dealing with the aftermath of the tornado at Spencer, or cleaning up after the tornado at Oglala, half of the productive time was never available, because they never had lights," Janklow said. "This can make a powerful difference in dealing with an emergency or a disaster."

Janklow invited 87 fire departments from western South Dakota to pick up their lighting units at Camp Rapid. Despite yesterday's weather, about 35 departments were able to send people Thursday to get the lights. The rest will pick them up later.

Janklow plans similar give-aways for other fire departments statewide later this spring. The lighting unit weighs about 250 pounds and fits in the back of a standard pickup truck. The 2,500-watt generator powers a pair of 1,000-watt metal halide lamps, which illuminate an area of approximately 36,000 square feet, or about two-thirds of a football field.

"The power outages in the Black Hills during the wind and snow and rain this week are the perfect example of a situation where this emergency system of a generator and lights can make a huge difference," he said.

The units were built by inmates at Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

If purchased on the commercial market, the light units would cost about \$3,000.

Fourteen inmates worked on the lights. It takes approximately 35 hours to build each unit. Welding instructor Phil Borota trained and supervised the inmate crews. Teams of inmates were responsible for the different phases of production. Among the things they learned on the project are mathematics and design; metal fabrication; welding; painting; wiring; and quality control.