

## **State of Indiana Response to Flooding**

3/22/18

*New information is in bold italics*

***Note to media – This is the final situation update from the Joint Information Center.***

### **BACKGROUND**

Beginning February 15, 2018, heavy rain and storms occurred, causing many rivers in Indiana to overflow their banks. County-level response continues in the southern portion of the state, as flood waters continue to move south and impact communities. The State Emergency Operations Center remains available for coordination and resource support.

State and local teams continue to conduct assessments and gather information, which began February 28, 2018. Teams from the American Red Cross are also assisting in damage assessment efforts. Assessments will continue in each county, until complete, at which time teams will continue to other affected counties. Indiana residents are still encouraged to report uninsured damage through the online portal located at <http://bit.ly/2018rainfall>.

Indiana residents impacted by flooding and in need of debris removal and sanitation assistance can contact the Red Cross, which can help citizens connect with reputable and vetted relief volunteers. All services are free, but not guaranteed due to an overwhelming need for assistance. Those needing assistance may call [888-684-1441](tel:888-684-1441).

Governor Eric J. Holcomb issued a disaster declaration due to flooding on March 16 that includes 35 Indiana counties: Benton, Carroll, Clark, Crawford, Dearborn, Elkhart, Floyd, Fulton, Gibson, Harrison, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Lake, LaPorte, Marshall, Newton, Noble, Ohio, Perry, Porter, Posey, Pulaski, Spencer, St.

Joseph, Starke, Switzerland, Vanderburgh, Vermillion, Wabash, Warren, Warrick and White counties. This flooding has destroyed or caused severe damage to homes, businesses, structures and infrastructure.

County Emergency Declarations: The following 35 counties have issued county emergency declarations: Benton, Carroll, Clark, Crawford, Dearborn, Elkhart, Floyd, Fulton, Gibson, Harrison, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Lake, LaPorte, Marshall, Newton, Noble, Ohio, Perry, Porter, Posey, Pulaski, Spencer, St. Joseph, Starke, Switzerland, Vanderburgh, Vermillion, Wabash, Warren, Warrick and White counties.

If a county has issued an emergency declaration, this means the county board of commissioners has determined that conditions are such that emergency services may not be provided to the public in a timely fashion, and may be significantly delayed. A county emergency declaration initiates county emergency plans, and allows additional resources to be provided by the state to assist local response efforts.

## **STATE RESPONSE**

The State Emergency Operations Center was activated Wednesday, February 21, 2018, and returned to daily staffing levels at 2 p.m., Friday, March 2, 2018, as the incident moved into recovery, and response needs decreased.

In addition to the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, other agencies providing services over the course of the incident response included the Department of Natural Resources, Indiana State Police, Indiana Department of Transportation, Indiana Department of Correction, Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Indiana National Guard, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the American Red Cross. These agencies remain on-call if additional support is needed.

The State Joint Information Center was activated Monday, February 26, 2018, at noon and continues to disseminate information. ***As of Friday, March 23, the Joint Information Center will close, and the Indiana Department of Homeland Security Office of Public Affairs will take over media and citizen support related to the flood recovery efforts. IDHS Office of Public Affairs can be reached at [317-234-6713](tel:317-234-6713) or [pio@dhs.in.gov](mailto:pio@dhs.in.gov).***

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security has launched a virtual disaster recovery resource page that can be accessed at: <http://in.gov/dhs/4055.htm>. Please share as appropriate.

*Damage assessment and federal evaluation of assessment data is ongoing across the state. If an individual visits a home requesting to assess the property, residents should request identification to verify agency affiliation. **Indiana residents who have not yet reported uninsured damage are requested to do so at <http://bit.ly/2018rainfall>.***

### **STATE ASSISTANCE CENTERS**

Hoosiers affected by severe weather and flooding in Indiana will have convenient access to assistance as the State of Indiana opens state assistance centers. Three northern one-stop disaster centers opened the week of Monday, March 5, and have since concluded services. The three Northern Indiana centers assisted approximately 460 Northern Indiana households. A Southern Indiana assistance center opened Thursday, March 15, and concluded operation on Saturday, March 17. A total of [92 Southern Indiana](#) households were served in Clark County.

Indiana residents who have questions or unmet concerns can reach out to the *Indiana Department of Homeland Security Office of Public Affairs* at [317-234-6713](tel:317-234-6713) or [pio@dhs.in.gov](mailto:pio@dhs.in.gov).

### **TETANUS VACCINATIONS**

The Indiana State Department of Health is supplying the following counties with doses of tetanus vaccine: Adams, Carroll, Clark, Crawford, Dearborn, Elkhart, Floyd, Jackson, Jefferson, Lake, Marshall, Newton, Perry, Porter, Spencer, Switzerland and White counties. Residents should contact the local health department for information about receiving vaccinations.

As of March 6, 2018, 2,280 doses of the tetanus vaccine have been distributed to local county health departments in response to flooding in northern and southern Indiana.

### **DNR EMERGENCY RULE**

The Division of Natural Resources director Cameron F. Clark has signed an emergency rule that temporarily eases DNR license requirements for specific repair or reconstruction in areas impacted by flood damage.

Work covered by the rule includes repair or reconstruction of bridges and culvert crossings, and the stabilization and repair of unstable stream banks. A copy of the entire emergency rule, including limitations and qualification requirements, can be found online at [IN.gov/nrc/files/lisa18152e.pdf](http://IN.gov/nrc/files/lisa18152e.pdf). Individuals with specific questions about the rule should contact the DNR Division of Water at [877-928-3755](tel:877-928-3755) (select option 5 when answered), or by emailing [water\\_inquiry@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:water_inquiry@dnr.IN.gov).

## **LAKE CLOSURES**

Lake restrictions at the West Lakes Chain in Noble County, and the Indian Lakes Chain in LaGrange County have been lifted.

Lake restrictions in Kosciusko County have been lifted.

## **SHELTERS**

Currently, there are no open shelters in Indiana, however, volunteers remain available in the event that the need arises. Those impacted by the recent floods may call [888-684-1441](tel:888-684-1441) for assistance.

## **DAMAGE REPORTING**

Indiana residents should report UNINSURED damage through the online portal located at <http://bit.ly/2018rainfall>. It can also be found at [dhs.in.gov](http://dhs.in.gov) under Featured Topics. The link is labeled "Indiana Damage Reporting for Heavy Rain and Flooding: February 15, 2018 and continuing"

Indiana residents with flood insurance should contact their insurance providers for instructions.

## **SAFE TRAVEL**

- As flood water moves south, some waterways in the southwest portion of the state have not yet crested. Hoosiers can find more information on INDOT routes that are currently

closed due to flooding by using the INDOT CARS program online at [indot.carsprogram.org](http://indot.carsprogram.org) or through the INDOT mobile app.

- Individuals can also call INDOT customer service at [1-855-463-6848](tel:1-855-463-6848). Check with city, town and county highway departments for the most up-to-date information on local roads affected by flooding.
- High water continues to require the closure of some roads in the Kankakee Fish and Wildlife Area. Do not ignore “high water” warning signs or drive around barricades closing roads for flooding.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNS**

- Well water in flood-affected areas may be contaminated with pathogens and be unsafe to consume. Residents who use wells should contact the local health department to coordinate testing to ensure their water sources are safe to drink.
- Mold is a real issue after a flood. Those affected should be instructed to remove any items from homes or businesses that have been wet for two or more days. A mixture of bleach and water (no more than one cup of bleach per gallon of water) can be used to on rigid surfaces such as countertops, floors, sinks and stoves and plastic toys. Mold can be growing and not be visible.
- Flood waters are not safe to swim in, play in or let pets and livestock be in. Flood waters contain various contaminants, chemicals and other dangerous pollutants that can make people and animals sick.
- No one who sees or experiences a disaster is untouched by it. Loss from flooding is no exception. Disaster stress and grief is normal, but there is help available if someone in the family needs mental health assistance/counseling. For information on human services, please visit the Indiana Family & Social Services Administration (FSSA). A list of counties with FSSA offices can be found online at <http://www.in.gov/fssa/dfr/2999.htm>.

## **FLOOD SAFETY AND CLEANUP**

The Red Cross has provided steps for people to follow if their community is affected by flooding:

- People should stay away from flood water. If someone comes across an area where water is above their ankles, they should stop, turn around and go another way. If they encounter a flooded road while driving, they should also turn around and go another way. If the car is caught in rising water, they should get out of the car quickly and move to higher ground.
- It is important to be especially cautious at night when it is harder to see flood dangers.
- Children are curious and should be kept out of the water.

- Continue listening to local radio or television stations or a NOAA Weather Radio for updated information and instructions. If away from home, return only when authorities say it is safe to do so.
- Before entering the home, look outside for loose power lines, damaged gas lines, foundation cracks or other damages.
- If the smell of natural or propane gas is present or a hissing sound is audible, leave immediately and call the fire department.
- If power lines are down outside the home, do not step in puddles or standing water.
- Make sure all food and water is safe. Discard items that have come in contact with flood water.
- When in doubt, throw it out!
- During cleanup, wear protective clothing, including rubber gloves and rubber boots.

In the aftermath of flooding and other natural disasters, property owners are vulnerable -- making perfect targets for scammers pretending to offer help cleaning up wreckage and making necessary repairs. Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill recommends the following when working with someone offering services:

- Avoid agreeing to any repair or restoration work on the spot during initial contact with someone offering services – this includes contracts.
- Avoid signing any legally binding agreements without first gathering information and researching a business being represented.
- Obtain information about the individual offering his or her services.
- Research the company the individual claims to represent.
- Look for signs of credibility such as an official website.
- Seek reviews and testimonials from former customers.

For more information about actions before, during and after flooding, visit [www.GetPrepared.in.gov](http://www.GetPrepared.in.gov), as well as [dhs.in.gov/4055.htm](http://dhs.in.gov/4055.htm).