

State of Indiana Response to Flooding

3/12/18

New information is in bold italics

Note to media – the next situation report will be published ***Thursday, March 15, 2018.***

DEVELOPING SITUATION

Beginning February 15, 2018, heavy rain and storms occurred, causing many rivers in Indiana to overflow their banks. The State Emergency Operations Center remains available for coordination and resource support.

As flood waters recede, property damage assessments are underway throughout the state. 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 has issued a disaster declaration due to flooding that currently includes 31 Indiana counties: Benton, Carroll, Clark, Crawford, Dearborn, Elkhart, Floyd, Fulton, Harrison, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Kosciusko, Lake, LaPorte, Marshall, Newton, Noble, Ohio, Perry, Porter, Posey, Pulaski, Spencer, St. Joseph, Starke,

Switzerland, 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 33 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, 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 had 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 at this time. Beginning March 3, 2018, the primary JIC hours are from 8 a.m. until 5:30 p.m.

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.

The State of Indiana has been receiving reports of FEMA employees performing damage assessments in Northern Indiana. At this time, while the State of Indiana and Red Cross have individuals assessing damage throughout the state, FEMA does not have any staff performing assessments. Assessors with insurance companies associated with the National Flood Insurance Program may be visiting policyholders. If an individual visits a home requesting to assess the property, residents should request identification to verify agency affiliation.

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. A Southern Indiana assistance center will open Thursday, March 15.

- [Lake County: 2460 Vermillion Street, Lake Station Indiana 46405](#)
(Polk Elementary School, in the gymnasium.)
 - *The Lake County center concluded services on Friday, March 9 at 8 p.m. local time.*
 - *A total of 109 Northern Indiana households were assisted at this location.*
- Jasper County: [112 Carnation Street SE, Demotte Indiana 46310](#)
(Demotte Town Hall)
 - *The Jasper County center concluded services on Saturday, March 10 at 2 p.m. local time.*
 - *A total of 52 Northern Indiana households were assisted at this location.*
- Elkhart County: [608 Oakland Drive, Elkhart Indiana 46516](#)
 - *The Elkhart County center concluded services on Saturday, March 10 at 6 p.m. local time.*
 - *A total of 303 Northern Indiana households were assisted at this location.*
- Clark County: Utica Town Hall, 107 N 4th St, Jeffersonville, IN 47130
 - Open Thursday, March 15 through Saturday, March 17, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. local time

State agencies will have representatives on site to provide immediate assistance and answer questions for those who have suffered a loss, including the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, Family and Social Services Administration, Department of Workforce Development, Indiana State Department of Health, Department of Insurance, Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority, Indiana State Board of Animal Health, Indiana State Department of Agriculture. The Indiana Office of Technology and the Indiana State Police will be providing additional support.

Northern Indiana residents who have questions or unmet concerns can reach out to the State of Indiana Joint Information Center at [317-238-1784](tel:317-238-1784).

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.

LAKE CLOSURES

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources has implemented emergency orders restricting motorboat operation at the West Lakes Chain, consisting of Waldron, Steinbarger, Tamarack and Jones Lakes in Noble County, as well as the Indian Lakes Chain, Witmer, Westler, Dallas, Hackenburg and Messick Lakes in LaGrange County until further notice.

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.

Cleanup kits will be available at the Disaster Assistance Center in Clark County beginning Thursday, March 15. Volunteer caseworkers will also be available from The Salvation Army and Red Cross to connect one-on-one with people to create individualized recovery plans, navigate paperwork and locate help from other agencies.

Those impacted by the flooding in need of Red Cross support are encouraged to call [1-888-684-1441](tel:1-888-684-1441).

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 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

- 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 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, as well as dhs.in.gov/4055.htm.