



INFORMATION ON HIGH WATER LEVEL AND FLOODING -- MAY 2011

Lake Champlain's record water level and continuing rainfall in the region has led to flooding at the City's Waterfront, parts of the bikepath, and in some residential areas along Lake Champlain. Even with good weather, it is anticipated that the water level will not recede to normal for at least a month. The City's Fire Department, Department of Public Works, Parks Department, and Burlington Electric Department continue to monitor the situation to ensure that there is no disruption in basic City services as a result of the flooding and that appropriate precautions are taken to maintain public safety. The City urges residents to take reasonable and normal precautions:

- **Never drive through standing or flowing water** – You may become stranded, and there is no way of safely knowing the water depth or the condition of the road.
- **Immediately call for assistance if your house begins to flood** – If your house is flooding and you need to be evacuated, call 911 immediately. Any delay in notification prevents emergency workers from responding to your home and family in a timely manner.
- **Electricity and water don't mix!** – In the event that your electric and/or gas services become threatened by rising water levels in your home, call qualified professionals to assess the situation, and take protective action (such as a licensed electrician for electrical issues or VT Gas, Inc. for natural gas emergencies). Never de-energize or re-energize an electrical service, or restore a fuel source that has been involved in flooding. This work must be done by a qualified professional in consultation with local authorities. Electricity and water are a deadly combination – call an electrician or your power company and keep yourself safe!
- **Be prepared for evacuation** – Prepare for a possible evacuation by assembling an emergency kit containing items that will help your family live for at least three days away from your home. Should local authorities order an evacuation of your neighborhood, your family will be ready and able to deal with the temporary move away from home until water levels subside.
- **Use reasonable care in waterfront areas** – please do not try to access shoreline areas (beaches, docks, etc.) that have been closed off! It's ok to enjoy the waterfront, but please do so responsibly.
- **Respect the privacy of those in homes affected by flooding** – please do not go to residential areas affected by flooding to take photos or gawk.

The American Red Cross is providing assistance to individuals forced from their homes due to flooding. The local Red Cross can be reached at (802) 660-9130. For additional flood safety information, refer to the Vermont Emergency Management website at: <http://vem.vermont.gov/> or www.ready.gov/america/beinformed/floods.html.

In the event that Burlington residents who live in flood – prone areas require assistance, they are encouraged to call 911 in the case of an emergency. Residents are also advised to contact the Department of Public Works at **863-9094** if they require sand and sandbags, to report damage caused by flooding, or other information on obtaining resources.

Flood Recovery - What Communities and Individuals Should be Doing Now (From VT Emergency Management)

WATERBURY – A number of communities have suffered significant damage in this week’s flooding. Recovery efforts have begun and could include help from the federal government.

The process of obtaining funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has begun, and the state of Vermont is working to get through the process as quickly as possible. Local communities should not delay in making repairs or cleaning up; if Vermont qualifies for FEMA assistance, those funds serve to reimburse communities for at least 75% of those costs.

The process of getting FEMA assistance and what communities should be doing now:

1. Cities and towns should keep close track of all recovery costs, to include:
 - a. All materials (including fuel for vehicles) to repair roads, bridges, or other public infrastructure and town buildings.
 - b. Pay for municipal employees who are taking part in the recovery, including overtime costs. This can include office staff working to support those efforts.
 - c. Cost of contractors used in the recovery.
 - d. Extra costs incurred by the storm. For instance, if there is a cost associated with closing school above and beyond normal expenses, those may be included.
 - e. Costs incurred preparing for the storm; that could include overtime paid to staff acting as spotters along rivers.
2. Communities should compile all costs and report them to Vermont Emergency Management.
3. VEM will work with the Agency of Transportation to verify some of the costs.
4. VEM and AOT will then do a joint local/state/FEMA Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA).

If Vermont shows at least \$1-million in verified statewide damages, individual counties would then have to meet a pre-established threshold to qualify for a FEMA declaration. That level is total qualified public damages of \$3.27 per capita in that county. These are not the only factors involved in receiving a Public Assistance disaster declaration, but the monetary levels are the biggest indicator.

Aid to individuals, private homeowners, business owners, renters, and others is more difficult to come by and Vermont has not qualified for so-called “Individual Assistance” since 1998. However, several state agencies and the office of Governor Peter Shumlin are exploring all avenues to provide relief.

The most likely avenue could be Small Business Administration loans (<http://www.sba.gov/taxonomy/term/99>). These funds are advertised as below-market interest rate loans used to help individuals recover. They would be made available to homeowners, business owners, some non-profits, and renters to recoup uninsured flood losses.

What homeowners and individuals should be doing now:

1. Ensure your home is safe to return to by having your electrical and heating systems inspected by qualified professionals.
2. Begin cleanup right away. Delay in cleaning up can cause things like mildew to spread and make cleanup more difficult.
3. Contact your insurance company.
4. Keep close records of how much it costs to clean your home and how much of your property has been lost.
5. **REPORT ALL DAMAGES/LOSSES AND RECOVERY COSTS TO YOUR CITY OR TOWN.** Your community representative will work with the state to see if your recovery costs qualify for assistance.