

Clinton County Office of Emergency Operations
Media Situational Update #8
May 24, 2011

Wind gusts as high as 50 miles per hour slammed against the Lake Champlain shore throughout the day on Monday. Weary homeowners continued their battle against Mother Nature, not sure if they are winning or losing. Waves 4 and 5 feet high knocked sand bag walls aside as people scurried to fortify their protective walls. Buildings that had been previously flooded and dry for a week now were once again flooded with 6 or more inches of water. Sand bags that have been in place for almost a month are showing signs of wear and tear as the constant surge of water pound into them. A small amount of rain fell overnight and water levels are once again expected to crest this afternoon.

Primary Sources for Situational Update

National Weather Service

The National Weather Service out of Burlington report twenty to thirty mile an hour winds throughout the day on Monday, May 23rd, with occasional gusts of forty miles an hour or more. Today's weather forecast is expected to be brighter and winds are expected to diminish slightly throughout the day.

Current Lake Champlain water levels are 102.32 at Rouse Point and are expected to crest at approximately 102.4 feet.

Utility Companies

The City of Plattsburgh Department of Public Works has resumed pumping water from the lift station located on North Margaret Street as lake water surged across the four lane roadway. Plattsburgh crews have been working diligently to maintain that portion of infrastructure in the City. The lift station serves as an important piece of the local sewer system to keep sewage water from backing up into homes in that vicinity.

The four inch sewer pipe that was to be dismantled yesterday by the City of Plattsburgh Public Works Department has been placed back into service and is anticipated to remain until the more recent lake water recedes.

A second 4 inch pipe, with another auxiliary pump has been added in an effort to prevent failure of a second lift station. The two pipes are providing an outlet for the sewer system that is part of the City of Plattsburgh, running north and the Town of Plattsburgh and also connecting to the Cumberland Head sewer system.

NYSEG continues to monitor the slow natural gas leak located four feet below water and will repair once the water recedes.

All power to evacuated buildings along North Margaret Street remains off. Repairs to flood damaged buildings continue.

State Agencies

Both State and National Emergency Service agencies have completed Preliminary Damage Assessments in Clinton County. OES Director Eric Day, expects to hear from them by the end

of this week to determine the next steps in the process of this natural disaster. Day again stated that this is the “Slowest natural disaster ever experienced by Clinton County and we face many weeks ahead of continued effort to bring normalcy back to areas of the County hardest hit”.

Day states that it will take months for the ravaged shores along Lake Champlain to return to even a semblance of pre-flood event use and appearance, if ever. The hardest hit areas may always appear like an ocean coastline landscape, than the serene Lake Champlain shores we remember.

Property owners are again encouraged to go online at www.clintoncountygov.com to complete forms for the Office of Emergency Services in an effort to better determine the full impact of this disaster locally.

Health and Safety

Clinton County Department of Social Services.

To date, 5/23/11, 93 requests for assistance due to flooding have been received and processed.

Thirty-six of the requests are from individuals temporarily residing somewhere other than the shelter.

A total of 68 vouchers for replacement clothing, along with referrals to Salvation Army & OLV thrift stores have been issued.

A total of 45 replacement Food Stamp Benefits have been issued.

Transportation needs, medication needs, legal advice and assistance with completing paperwork have been ongoing.

Storage for personal belongings and assistance with transporting those belongings to the storage facility will continue until more permanent housing can be secured for those remaining in the shelter.

3 staff members are currently assigned to the shelter.

To date 50 individuals have secured alternate housing. An additional 2-3 have located alternate housing and are in the application process with potential landlords.

Clinton County Health Department (Environmental)

Public Water Systems – the City of Plattsburgh has been able to keep sewage pump stations operational; Village of Rouses Point has been able to maintain safe water plant operation, though flood waters continue to surround the lake-side water plant. Crews have been working around the clock maintaining service to their residents during this event. All public water remains safe to drink and use for daily needs.

Homeowners – Lake Champlain remains at flood stage and standing water continues to create problems for homeowners. Private well and septic system issues will become obvious when waters recede and people/tenants are able to move back into homes/apartments. Water that smells; is cloudy; or off color are signs that the water source is most likely contaminated. This water **should not** be consumed or used for daily needs like drinking, brushing teeth, cooking or bathing.

Homeowners who experienced either Lake or standing water covering their well cap should strongly suspect that their well has been contaminated with bacteria and the system will need to be disinfected. Homeowners should have their home water source tested for contamination by a certified lab before using the water for any purpose in the home. The cost is approximately \$25 and is paid for by the homeowner.

Septic system issues people need to look for are: slow draining toilets, tubs, washers and sinks; sewer backing up into the home through bathtubs and sinks; or sewer smells from bathtubs and sinks. Residents are cautioned to limit water use in their home to help decrease stress on their leach field. They should also seek professional assistance and consider having their septic tank pumped to help the leach field function until the ground around is able to absorb the standing water.

Homeowners can contact the Clinton County Health Dept. Environmental Health Unit at 565-4870 to locate a certified laboratory or go to their web site at www.clintonhealth.org for the information.

Hard copies on private water and sewage information can also be obtained through the Clinton County Office of Emergency Services located at 16 Emergency Services Drive in Plattsburgh.

Clinton County Mental Health

The Clinton County Office of Mental Health remains on call as needed, for mental health related issues. The agency continues to work closely with the American Red Cross to provide the services needed for those remaining in the shelter.

American Red Cross

The shelter remains open for those residents who had been evacuated from their homes along the North Margaret Street area of the City of Plattsburgh. Currently 23 residents remain in the shelter. A significant number have been able to secure temporary or permanent housing after being displaced from their residences. Strong efforts are being made by all agencies assisting the American Red Cross to find housing for those remaining in the shelter by the end of the month.

With the recent exodus of college students, landlords are opening up their rental units to displaced flood victims for the summer. Local agencies hope this will allow adequate time to repair their flooded homes so residents can return to them by the end of the summer.

The Clinton County Health Department, along with the local St. John Feral Cat Fund, and Elmore SPCA continue to provide shelter to the pets of those residents in the shelter. The CART – (Co-Sheltering of Pets) program has been a challenge for everyone involved. The current number of animals is: 8 cats and 4 dogs.

Municipal Infrastructure

The Town of Plattsburgh Highway Department dumped additional 40-50 truckloads of shot rock around the Cumberland Bay road yesterday. This is on top of the well over 200 loads that have been dumped along the shores of Lake Champlain since the flood event began in April, along that roadway.

According to Fred Lavene, Town Plattsburgh Highway Superintendent, “No road surface has been lost due to the flooding along Cumberland Head in the Town of Plattsburgh”. Town crews will remain on site throughout the day today monitoring the situation. It has been a tremendous effort put forth by the Town to maintain that road.

Further north in the Town of Champlain, highway crews provided support by dumping shot rock along that portion of the lake shore and monitored roads in an effort to assure safe passage by local residents.

A portion of the seawall that runs along Edgewater Estates, crumbled as a result of the southerly waves experienced yesterday. Homeowners continued to fight for their property and were able to have shot rock brought in to help provide shoreline support. Water was virtually hitting the sides of the buildings and some residences suffered a small amount of water damage from yesterday’s lake surge.

North Margaret Street in the City of Plattsburgh remained closed this morning, only open to residents on that end of the City.

For the latest list of road closures in the county please visit your town on the web or go to www.clintoncountygov.com.

Continued updates will be provided through the Clinton County Office of Emergency Services on an as needed basis. For additional information contact Clinton County OEC at 565-4791 or the Clinton County web page or www.clintoncountygov.com or the Clinton County Health Department web page at www.clintonhealth.org .

Endorsed by: _____
Eric Day, Director
Clinton County Office of Emergency Services