

STATE OF NEBRASKA  
Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)  
March 20, 2019 1230

**CONTACTS:**

Taylor Gage, (402) 471-1970

[Taylor.gage@nebraska.gov](mailto:Taylor.gage@nebraska.gov)

Alyssa Sanders, (402) 405-6137

[Alyssa.sanders@nebraska.gov](mailto:Alyssa.sanders@nebraska.gov)

Mike Wight, (402) 471-7428

## Nebraskans, Others Step Up to Help Flood Victims Many Resources Available

**Lincoln, Neb.** – Overnight, the number of cities under emergency declarations in response to the devastation from the historic weather events increased to 89. There are 77 counties under declarations, 4 tribal nations, and 5 special government areas such as unincorporated townships. Declarations cover more than 80 percent of the state.

As Nebraskans are beginning to return home to flood ravaged communities, the reality of what comes next hits hard. It can be overwhelming.

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) website - <https://nema.nebraska.gov/> - has an interactive map of declarations, a chart of estimated damage costs, and general information on the floods.

There are many resources available, and the State of Nebraska has compiled information on agencies providing assistance and information. A 24-hour call center has been established at the Joint Information Center (JIC) at NEMA. The call center is staffed by state employees from a variety of agencies who are available to connect citizens with the resources needed. The call center number is 402-817-1551. **This is *not* a FEMA resource number. A federal declaration has *not* been made. If a federal declaration is made, a FEMA contact number will be announced.**

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) has set up a hotline for donations of hay and other farm supplies. That hotline number is 800-831-0550. The Nebraska National Guard is currently executing hay drops in areas where livestock are cut off from feed. In addition, NDA has a Rural Response Hotline for farmers and producers who are needing emotional support or someone to talk to: 800-464-0258.

When disasters occur, there are always people who try to profit off of the needs of others. Fraudulent funding schemes are popping up on the Internet. To find a legitimate agency for monetary and other goods and services donations, contact 211. To reach 211, simply dial 211. If you have difficulty reaching 211, dial 866-813-1731.

Any Nebraskan knows that neighbors helping neighbors is everyday life in the heartland. Our National Guard troops are our neighbors, friends, and family.

Sunday, Natasha Hilsген, a staff sergeant with the Nebraska Air National Guard, helped with food rescue efforts to Fremont. Hilsген said the sun was just setting as the National Guard convoy crossed the bridge into town. The town had been without fresh supplies of food and water for two days as it was surrounded with flood waters.

"As we approached the town, I saw people coming out of their houses, standing on street corners, waving and clasping their hands in joy," Hilsген said. "We drove to the HyVee store to begin distribution efforts. As we rounded the corner we saw the parking lot filled with hundreds of people. A great cheer rose from the crowd when they saw the convoy."

Hilsген reported people from the community thanked the Nebraska National Guard and all the volunteers with hugs and handshakes. A long line formed as supplies were unloaded at the store.

"As we began carrying bottled water into the store, an elderly lady, who had been for waiting hours hugged me and was overcome with emotion," said Hilsген. "She was so thankful and relieved knowing that even in difficult and trying times, there are Nebraskans doing things 'the Nebraska way' by watching out for our most vulnerable citizens."

Agriculture is Nebraska's number one industry, and a flooding disaster of this magnitude has an impact on everyone. Farmers and ranchers have immediate and immense needs as caring for their animals and keeping them safe is a top priority. It's devastating to lose livestock under any circumstance, and this is on such a large scale.

Nebraska has been appreciative of the overwhelming response of donations of hay, feed, equipment, etc. In addition to local offers of assistance from Nebraskans, ag-related donations are coming in from all over the country: Texas, Oklahoma, Minnesota, South Dakota, Iowa, Georgia, Michigan, Kansas, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Mississippi, North Carolina and Colorado. For the first 20-25 calls for ag assistance, Nebraska received more than 110 offers to help.

One of the many challenges Nebraska is facing, in matching donated ag resources to farmers and ranchers in need, is the ability to physically get the resources to the ag producers when roads and railways are flooded and inaccessible. Field staff with the NDA, working in northeast Nebraska, hand delivered donated hay from the community of West Point to a local cattle producer in need. NDA has staff working in the State Emergency Operations Center coordinating requests for assistance with donations.

###

Word Count: 730