



NEWS RELEASE

STATE OF NEBRASKA
Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)

CONTACT:
Taylor Gage, (402)-471-1970
taylor.gage@nebraska.gov
Mike Wight, (402) 471-7428; (402) 416-9389
mike.wight@nebraska.gov
Jodie Fawl, (402) 471-7428; (402) 326-3179
jodie.fawl@nebraska.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 8, 2015, 4:15 p.m.

State Keeping an Eye on the Sky

Gov. Pete Ricketts Declares State of Emergency

Lincoln, Neb. — State officials have concerns that forecasts for additional rainfall could further impact flooded areas in southeast Nebraska following storms and tornadoes that swept through the state Wednesday night.

The latest forecast from the National Weather Service indicates a slight to enhanced risk of severe weather south of I-80 in the central counties of the state Saturday, especially in the afternoon and evening.

There were 46 counties under tornado watches for storms and 12 had tornado warnings. The following counties are included in the state's disaster declaration: Adams, Antelope, Boone, Burt, Butler, Cass, Clay, Colfax, Cuming, Dakota, Dixon, Dodge, Douglas, Fillmore, Franklin, Gage, Hall, Hamilton, Harlan, Jefferson, Johnson, Kearney, Lancaster, Madison, Merrick, Nance, Nemaha, Nuckolls, Otoe, Pawnee, Phelps, Pierce, Platte, Polk, Richardson, Saline, Sarpy, Saunders, Seward, Stanton, Thayer, Thurston, Washington, Wayne, Webster, and York.

According to the National Weather Service, river forecasts for the Missouri River from Plattsmouth and downriver could reach minor flooding stages by this weekend. The National Weather Service has issued flood warnings for some of those locations. They are advising the public to not drive cars through areas where water covers the roads.

Several inches of snow are predicted in western Nebraska and combined with any additional rain or severe weather, may impact emergency operations.

Rural Response Hotline - Stress and distress are common when recovering from floods. For those who need to talk, there's the Rural Response Hotline, **1-800-464-0258**, a free and confidential service.

Here's the link to a list of local health departments and their emergency response coordinators.

<http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Documents/ERCs.pdf>

Nebraska National Guard- Sixteen Nebraska National Guard soldiers and 10 vehicles have been assisting in DeWitt providing security in cooperation with the Nebraska State Patrol. The soldiers are also providing some transportation assistance in DeWitt.

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency — The State Emergency Operations Center at NEMA is partially activated in

response to damages resulting from tornadoes and flooding, staffed by officials from the Nebraska State Patrol, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Roads and the Nebraska Military Department. There is 24-hour-a-day staff coverage of the SEOC by NEMA staff. This will continue for the weekend.

Department of Natural Resources continues to monitor the aftermath of the storm including river and dam conditions. Citizens are advised to be cautious about high river stages and water running over roads and dams' auxiliary spillways. Officials urge people not to risk personal safety and vehicle damage by getting stuck in a flooded roadway too deep to cross. Take the high road and turn around.

Engineers with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Dam Safety Program have been working with the local natural resource districts (NRD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to monitor the dams in Saline, Fillmore, Thayer, Jefferson and Lancaster Counties.

DNR's Dam Safety Program inspected five dams in Saline and Jefferson Counties in the hardest hit areas where rainfall totals exceeded 10 inches. The dams were found to be performing optimally, holding back thousands of acre-feet of floodwater with no significant problems.

Water was flowing through the earthen auxiliary spillways at four of the dams that were inspected. The other dam had been overtopped by flood water but was not damaged. All the dams affected by Wednesday night's rainfall with populated areas downstream have emergency action plans in place. These action plans could be activated if conditions at the dams would warrant further action.

Local and state officials will continue to monitor the condition of the dams. DNR staff has been monitoring river conditions throughout the area. Stream gaging crews are out measuring high water stages and flows.

With elevated river stages, saturated grounds, and additional rain forecast this Saturday, DNR Acting Director **Jim Schneider** said, "I want to advise residents along the flooding rivers to be aware of weather alerts and flooding warnings."

Nebraska Department of Roads had reports that flooding closed the following roads. Please use caution as roadways may still be flooded.

Highway 77 at the 6th Street Bridge in Beatrice is closed.

Highway 136 at the west edge of Beatrice is closed.

Highway 53 is closed 5 miles north and 6 miles south of Alexandria.

Highway 66 near the Guard Camp Road east of Ashland was a detour but is now closed due to flooding.

Nebraska State Patrol troops were actively assisting with road closures, rescue operations and providing situational awareness with helicopter flights over affected areas.

Department of Health and Human Services reports they are working to assist the Parkview Nursing Home in Deshler that was evacuated to the public school due to flooding. DHHS staff is assessing needs of other assisted living facilities. Public Health is monitoring public water systems in communities affected by flooding.

Lancaster County Emergency Management — Public safety officials are advising residents in the North and South Bottoms neighborhoods to voluntarily evacuate as soon as possible. The affected area is bordered by Folsom, Eighth, Van Dorn and Cornhusker streets. Public safety officials used some large vehicles with high clearance to evacuate a few dozen residents in the South Bottoms neighborhood who are unable to walk through the flood water.

The City's Theresa Street Wastewater Treatment Facility has reached full capacity and is discharging untreated sewage and rainwater into Salt Creek. Local officials can take action like this to protect infrastructure and to prevent further sewage backups. City and State officials strongly advise residents to avoid Salt Creek flood waters for health and safety reasons. For more information, contact Donna Garden, assistant director of Public Works and Utilities at

402-430-6449.

Those needing assistance with transportation can call (402) 441-5530.

Most of Wilderness Park, including the Jamaica North Trail south of Pioneers Blvd., will be closed to public access until damage to the trails and bridges can be assessed.

American Red Cross – The new, all-inclusive Emergency App from the American Red Cross provides people with instant access to emergency alerts, life-saving information, and ways to contact family and friends in one free, easy-to-use app for smart phones and tablets.

The app is available in app stores by searching for the American Red Cross or by going to [redcross.org/apps](https://www.redcross.org/apps).

Jefferson County Emergency Management — Residents in 169 homes west of the railroad tracks in Fairbury were evacuated. Twenty-six people were housed at the American Lutheran Church. A total of 110 people were evacuated. Endicott evacuated a brick yard manufacturing facility.

Saline County Emergency Management — Clean-up and assessment were underway in the Saline County village of DeWitt.

An overnight curfew ended at 8 a.m., according to Randy Badman, DeWitt village board chairman. The town is open for those wishing to return to their homes and persons coming to clean up, but spontaneous volunteers are not being encouraged at this time.

Most areas are slippery and wet. There are also concerns with possible natural gas leaks in some areas due to some compromised basement walls. Residents and public works representatives are currently assessing needs and Black Hills Energy is conducting house-to-house inspections of the natural gas system. Anyone with questions about gas service should call Black Hills Energy at 888-890-5554.

The floodwaters receded overnight, which allowed the re-opening of Nebraska Highway 103 this morning. Water has receded in town and most streets are open, but there are a few still impassable.

The water and electrical systems remain at full efficiency; the wastewater system is operating at capacity with no problems.

Public Health Solutions, the district health department, has set up an information center in the DeWitt Legion Club located 1 block north of the post office.

Roll-off dumpsters and more pumps to help remove water from basements are currently being acquired. Residents who need those services are urged to call the village office at 402-683-5025.

Thayer County Emergency Management — Parkview Nursing Home and six homes were inundated by flood waters in Deshler. Forty-three people were evacuated to the public school.

State wide anyone needing assistance from the American Red Cross should call (844) 334-7569

###